

# Britain stands behind Iraq uranium charge

AP, London

Britain snapped back at its close ally the United States on Saturday after the White House cited it as the source of questionable information that President Bush used to bolster the case for war against Iraq in his State of the Union speech.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's office insisted he still believes the disputed charge that Iraq sought uranium in Africa was true, saying Britain has reliable information it cannot share with Washington because it comes from foreign intelligence sources.

For the past week, the White House has faced a storm of criticism after it discovered the accusation that Saddam Hussein's regime sought to buy uranium from Niger for a nuclear weapons program. The CIA said it had doubts about the British claim.

In a letter made public Saturday, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said the CIA had expressed doubts to Britain about the uranium charge but did not specify what they were. Britain did not know until recently that the agency sent an envoy to Niger who investigated the claims and discounted them, he added.

Straw defended Britain's publication of the claim in September in a dossier on alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the CIA reservations, "UK officials were confident that the dossier's statement was based on reliable intelligence which we had not shared with the US," Straw wrote. "A judgment was therefore made to retain it."

Doubts about the uranium charge are at the center of critics' accusations that Bush and Blair exaggerated the danger posed by Saddam Hussein's regime to justify the invasion of Iraq. One of the documents suggesting Iraq sought uranium in Niger for its alleged nuclear weapons program was exposed as a forgery.

With Bush facing questions on the issue throughout his trip to Africa, the White House blamed the

CIA for letting the statement go when it vetted Bush's speech. CIA director George Tenet took responsibility Friday, saying the agency should have warned the president off, since it doubted the British finding.

Bush and Blair, close allies, are scheduled to meet Thursday in Washington, where the British leader plans to address a joint session of Congress, according to his office.

Straw wrote in his letter to the House of Commons select committee on foreign affairs that the CIA reservations over the claim were "unsupported by explanation" and that Britain had based its charge in part on intelligence it did not share with the United States.

The letter did not say why Britain declined to share the information with its ally, but Straw wrote that he had explained the reasons privately to the Parliamentary committee.

A Blair spokesman said the information had come from foreign intelligence services and was "not ours to share." He declined to say what country or countries had been the source.

The United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency asked for information on the allegation after the dossier was published, but Britain did not provide any, UN officials said.

The agency later asked Washington and London for new evidence after determining documents it received from the United States were forgeries. Mark Gwozdecky, spokesman for the Vienna-based IAEA, said it had not received any new information.

Blair has said he still believes the uranium charge to be true and that it was based on sources other than the forged document.

Straw wrote that until reports appeared recently in the press, Britain was unaware that a US envoy went to Niger to investigate the claim and found it could not be substantiated. He said American officials have since confirmed they

did not tell Britain of the visit.

Envoy Joseph Wilson's report, Straw wrote, "does indeed describe the denials of Niger government officials in early 2002 that a contract had been concluded for the sale of yellowcake to Iraq."

Yellowcake is a lightly processed form of uranium used in making nuclear weapons.

But Straw argued that part of Wilson's report bolstered the British claim. Wilson, he wrote, noted that an Iraqi delegation had in 1999 "sought the expansion of trade links with Niger - and that former Niger government officials believed that this was in connection with the procurement of yellowcake."

"Uranium is Niger's main export," Straw continued. "In other words, this element of Ambassador Wilson's report supports the statement in the government's dossier."

## Correction

A report headlined "Defence ministry clarification" published in The Daily Star on Sunday referred to the defence ministry due to confusion arising out of a press release. Instead of the defence ministry and ISPR, it should read the Army Headquarters.

## Body-find

FROM PAGE 1  
river after being sucked into a whirlpool with about 750 passengers aboard.

The search hit snags due to driving rains and raging currents in the confluence of the Padma, Meghna and Dakatia, leaving many passengers unaccounted for.

One body was retrieved yesterday at Kabai in Bakherganj and the MV Mashiron Khan reached Lalmoan from Chandpur with three more, bringing the body count to 122. The three bodies were buried in a mass grave.

The disaster sent the offshore island of Bhola, a district that has faced a huge loss of life, mourning the dead and arranging condolence meetings, among other programmes.

Water Resources Minister MA Hafiz attended one such programme in Lalmoan the MV Nasrin-1 was heading for Tuesday night. The programmes are likely to continue until August 16, the day of chelium.

Such a loss of life from Bhola alone in a single incident rekindles the horror unfolded by the devastating cyclone of 12 November in 1970.

No financial help was officially declared yet for the families of the victims. Locals accused the government of underreporting the casualties, which created outrage in the area.

## DCC nod

FROM PAGE 1  
Dhaka University and two homeowners have also been approved, said sources.

According to a decision at a meeting between the One Stop Cell and the service providers, digging of up to 30 metres of road will have to be completed in a day and up to 60 metres in three days.

According to a consensus with the service providers, all road digging has to be completed in 15 days, while only WASA will get 21 days for laying sewers and water lines. The DCC will start repairing the ruptured roads the next day and has fixed a new rate for repair.

Under the new provision, if service providers fail to meet the deadline, they will have to pay fines.

The meeting also resolved that a road dug by a service provider once would not be approved for digging in next two years but can be permitted for repair or maintenance.

## Lawyers

FROM PAGE 1  
Chief Justice KM Hasan yesterday administered oath to MM Ruhul Amin.

Lawyers brought out a silent procession as part of their protest. The Bar earlier had called a general meeting to discuss its next course of action.

Bar President Rakanuddin Mahmud at the meeting demanded that the government appoint Justice Syed Amirul Islam to the Appellate Division.

"The Bar would take appropriate action if the chief justice failed to take any initiative to this end," added Rakanuddin.

He recalled that a chief justice could not sit in the bench for four long years in the teeth of a lawyers' movement.

Speaking at the meeting, Dr Kamal Hossain expressed his annoyance at appointment of the judge by superseding his senior.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam said the appointment proves that the judiciary is not independent. It also signals that doors for those awaiting elevation are closed if they were not loyal to the government.

Later, a delegation led by Dr Kamal met Chief Justice KM Hasan at his chamber and conveyed the Bar decision to him.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presides over a meeting on the recent launch disaster with Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain and other senior ministers at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

## Flood takes more areas

FROM PAGE 1  
Narayani-Demra Dam was out of danger yesterday as the pressure of floodwaters lessened with the opening of sluice gates of its irrigation canals, officials said.

The government has allocated 7,515 tonnes of rice worth Tk 9.18 crore and Tk 74.04 lakh for the flood affected people in the northern districts, said an official handout of the relief and disaster management ministry.

The flood situation in the central part of the country including Munshiganj, Manikganj, Narayani, Rajbari, Narsingdi, Madaripur and the low lying areas of the Dhaka district has worsened. Experts said the water rushing down from the upstream has aggravated the situation.

The Flood Forecasting Centre has said the flood situation in the districts of Jamalpur, Pabna, Tangail, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, Narayani, Kishoreganj, Rajbari and Madaripur is likely to deteriorate in the next few days.

However, the flood situation in the districts of Gaibandha, Bogra and Serajganj is likely to remain unchanged. The situation in Kurigram, Panchagarh, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Rangpur may improve.

Our Sirajganj correspondent has reported that the swelling Jamuna inundated more areas of the affected Kaziupur, Belkuchi, Choulhai, Shahadpur and Sadar upazila.

The situation has worsened in Manikganj over the last three days. The road communication between Ghior and Dhaka has been snapped.

The flood control embankment along the swelling Atrai, a river in the Brahmaputra basin, collapsed in four places inundating more than 100 villages yesterday in Manda upazila of Noaagaon.

Another 37 villages under five upazila of Tangail were submerged by gushing waters eroding banks of the Jamuna and Dhaleswari rivers.

A BSS report from Kurigram says the deluge forced distressed people to take loan at an interest rate as high as 20 per cent to buy food particularly for the children as the flood rendered thousands of people jobless and homeless.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports that the road communica-

tion between Gaibandha and Fulchari Upazila has been cut off by floodwaters overflowing the road.

A cinema and a girls' school have gone under water in Fulchari. Over two lakh people have been marooned in different flood affected places.

In Pabna new areas went under water. Our Pabna correspondent reports that eight out of 10 unions have been inundated in Bera upazila of the district.

Near about 9,520 families were marooned and more than 700 houses have been washed away. The flood situation in Bogra, Sirajganj, Pabna, Jamalpur, Tangail and Kishoreganj has worsened. The flood-affected people in Shariakandi upazila in Bogra district are facing an acute shortage of drinking water.

Army engineers and high officials of the Water Development Board (WDB) yesterday visited the DND Dam at Kadamtali point in Siddhirganj and declared it safe.

Raging floodwaters of the Sitalakha overflowed the dam on Saturday, threatening to maroon about one million people living in the low-lying irrigation project areas.

Kazi Golam Hossain, chief engineer of the central zone of the WDB, said: "There is no immediate threat to the dam, it is now out of danger." District Commissioner of Narayani-5 M Harun-Ur-Rashid visited different points of the dam yesterday.

The met office has recorded rainfall, which is 56 per cent less than expected, during the first 12 days of this month and there is no chance of heavy rain in the next few days. But the onrush of water from the upper catchment areas owing to rain last month is still continuing.

The WDB officials said the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Ganges-Padma registered further rise at all points. Other rivers in these two basins registered both rise and fall. The rivers in the Meghna and the South Eastern Hill basins also registered rise and fall. Out of 85 monitoring points, 47 recorded rise, 21 recorded fall and one point remained steady. The rivers were flowing above the danger mark at 16 points.



Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a press conference, organised by the Oikya Procheta at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

## JEC meet today

FROM PAGE 1  
countries in the two-days talks, sources said.

The secretary level JEC standing committee will sit tomorrow at 9.30 am at the conference room of the Economic Relations Division (ERD). Indian External Affairs Secretary Kanwal Sibal and Bangladesh ERD Secretary Mirza Tafazzel Beg will lead their respective delegation on the first day.

On the concluding day (Tuesday), Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morsheed Khan and Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha will lead their teams respectively.

Meanwhile, a seven-member Indian delegation led by Joint Secretary Neelam Deo arrived from Delhi yesterday. The Indian external affairs secretary is expected to arrive today (Monday) to join the meet.

Bangladesh delegation comprises high officials of the ERD, and

the ministries of foreign affairs, commerce and communications.

The Indian external affairs minister will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at 12.30 pm on Tuesday. Later, he will attend a luncheon with Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

Indian Deputy High Commissioner Dilip Sinha told reporters on Saturday that issues relating to trade, economic cooperation, investment and transport would come up at the JEC meeting.

The India-Bangladesh JEC formed in 1982 had so far only five meetings. The last meeting was held in 1997.

Sources said Bangladesh has been avoiding Indian interest in discussing transit and transshipment issues during the last two commerce secretary level meetings, held in 2002 and 2003, terming those as agenda for JEC meeting.

## R&H deptt

FROM PAGE 1  
The comptroller and auditor general suggested the authorities realise the money from the corrupted officials and employees.

According to the report, 15,544 audit objections, involving Tk 7,733.93 crore, remained unsettled till 2000-2001 fiscal.

Barisal R&H office misappropriated Tk 13.03 crore by publishing advertisement in fake newspapers.

Officials claimed that a tender advertisement was published in The New Nation and Sangbad. But auditors found no advertisement in those newspapers.

Barisal zone R&H also failed to collect Tk 85.98 lakh from leaseholders who owed, the government the amount in VAT and tax.

The audit also found Tk 2.93 crore in toll remaining unrealised from leaseholders of Meghna-Gomti bridge and Meghna bridge by Narayani R&H office.

A stolen motorcycle of the same office made the department count a loss of Tk 74,000.

As the R&H offices in Shariatpur, Cox's Bazar, Kishoreganj and Moulvibazar did not realise fines from people concerned for not completing works within stipulated time, the government exchequer suffered a loss of Tk 50.54 lakh.

Netrakona R&H office paid an additional Tk 55.76 lakh to contractors for earthwork of 3,582 metres of a bailey bridge against the required 2,492 metres.

Since 1971-72 fiscal, the report detected 19,344 audit objections, involving Tk 8245.42 crore, of which only 3,800 were disposed of.

## Akbar

FROM PAGE 1  
Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Home Minister Atif Hossain Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the PM Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and acting Shipping Secretary Zulfiqar Haider Chowdhury attended the meeting where the shipping secretary had to digest his share of the blame from the prime minister.

At the meeting, the prime minister gave instructions to take immediate steps to refurbish the existing shipping management practices and reform relevant laws for passengers safety.

He directed quick implementation of decisions regarding launch terminal administration including stopping vessel overloading, illegal labour and vendor activities and harassment of passengers. He also gave instructions to severely deal with untrained launch operators and those found guilty of issuing false fitness and design certificates for vessels, and for allowing faulty and overloaded vessels to sail off.

Khaleda Zia also stressed the need for strict adherence to vessel departure schedules and exigencies arising out of weather forecast.

He directed to speed up the salvage operation of the capsized launch MV Nasrin-1 and take proper measures to hand over the bodies to their relatives and for proper burial of unidentified bodies.

## JS passes bills

FROM PAGE 12  
child) has been raised to 16 years from 14.

The bill said if a woman commits suicide for fear of losing her chastity due to willful act of a person, the person will be then made accused as a provocateur and for that offence he will be punished with maximum ten years and minimum five years of imprisonment.

The bill has the provision that a baby born out of rape will be kept under the care of mother and the baby will be known after his/her mother or father or both. Besides, the state will take the responsibility of that baby until he/she attains the age of 21 years. In case of a girl child, the state will take care of her until she gets married.

Under this provision, the state will be able to realise the money spent for upbringing of such a baby from the rapist.

The bill brought amendment to a provision of the original law of 2000 by omitting 'indecent gesture' from the lists of sexual harassment offences, as in most cases the provision of 'indecent gesture' is overexploited to harass the opponents.

The bill relaxed certain provisions of dowry saying that only people directly linked in dowry seeking would be considered for trial.

The bill provisioned that opinion of the rape victims has to be taken if the victim has to be taken under safe custody.

With the passage of the Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill,

## 9 outlaws

FROM PAGE 12  
PBCP cadres Irfan Molla, 3, Shahidul Islam, 28, Sharful Islam, 26, and Akhtar, 28, were arrested at Batiaghata. The NBCP cadres arrested at the same upazila are Siraj, 30, Uday, 34, Shukur, 25, Biswajit, 30, and Shahadat, 30.

Police said the PBCP cadres had been hired from Jhenidah district to carry out murder operations while all five NBCP cadres are wanted in several murder and other criminal cases.

## 50 Sadarghat staff

FROM PAGE 1  
capsized of overcrowded MV Nasrin-1 in the Chandpur confluence with about 750 passengers on board on Tuesday night.

Of the passengers, about 200 swam ashore or were rescued by fishing boats. One hundred and twenty-two bodies were retrieved until yesterday and the remaining were missing, feared drowned.

Earlier, about 100 passenger launches departed from the terminal every day which has now come down to 80, a high official of the BIWTA said.

The shipping ministry on Saturday decided to bring total take to the terminal staff and take punitive measures against the guilty in the wake of launch sinking.

The reshuffle orders came separately as the staff were under different regulatory bodies, a shipping ministry official said.

It will take a few more days to transfer all the 140 officials and employees at the terminal because of some legal barriers, he said.

The BIWTA officials said they issued transfer and replacement order of 15 officials and 30 employees until yesterday afternoon.

Their replacements were brought in from Khulna, Narayanganj and Aricha, sources added.

The Department of Shipping transferred all five officials and employees posted to Sadarghat and replaced them with officials at the headquarters.

There was an initiative to bring officials and employees from Chittagong, but could not be done because of complex legal procedures, a high official said.

The BIWTA officials said all

2003, in the House yesterday, the compensation amount has been increased from Tk 5,000 to Tk one lakh to curb the trend of filing false cases.

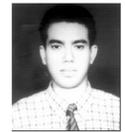
It vested the district judges with the powers of case-revision in certain cases. Previously, revision appeal against orders of the lower judiciary could only be filed with the High Court Division.

A provision of the bill put some new measures in case of serving ad interim or temporary injunction on the government.

The bill said no court should pass any order of ad interim or temporary injunction against the government or any statutory public authority without hearing the government pleader, if such order is likely to prejudice or interfere with any measure designed to implement any development programme or otherwise harm public interest.

## Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Manzurul Hasan Masud, a brilliant student, who has been suffering from blood cancer seeks financial help for his treatment.

Doctors advised him to go abroad for bone marrow transplantation which will cost about Tk 40 lakh.

But Masud, who comes from a lower middle class family and lost his father, cannot afford such expensive treatment.

The 28-year-old youth did his Master's from Bangladesh Agricultural University.

He is now undergoing treatment at Cabin No. 12, Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Contributions can be sent to Morshedul Hasan, Savings Account No. 12983, Sonali Bank, Malibagh Branch, Dhaka.

Interested persons can also contact him over phone (9330875, 018-242094, 0171-193364).

## Barrister Ishtiaq

FROM PAGE 1  
Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj, among others, attended the namaj-e-janaja.

The second janaja was held at Azad Mosque in Gulshan in the afternoon before the burial. Earlier, the body was brought from Combined Military Hospital (CMH) to the Supreme Court premises where his long time colleagues had a last glimpse.

President Iajuddin Ahmed visited the late lawyer's Gulshan residence Saturday night to pay his last respect. He also consoled the bereaved family members, said a handout yesterday.

He recalled the contributions of the late lawyer during his long and successful legal career and his active participation in various democratic movements.

Meanwhile, different socio-cultural and political organisations have issued separate statements expressing profound shock at the death of the renowned lawyer.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar in a condolence message also expressed his deep grief over the demise of Barrister Ishtiaq. He recalled the contributions of the late counsel in different democratic movements and said that it is an irreparable loss of the nation.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

In the message, he said the death of Barrister Ishtiaq has created a vacuum in the judiciary. He recalled the crucial role of the late constitutional expert whenever the country faced crisis.

Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui, Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj, State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Shahjahan Omar issued separate condolence

messages expressing profound shock at his death.

Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the Awami League, in a condolence message also expressed his profound shock at the death of Barrister Ishtiaq.

The opposition leader recalled the pioneering role of the late Barrister Ishtiaq in establishing democracy and rule of law in the country. Jalil also recalled his contribution in the country's language movement.

Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Party (Manju-Shahid), A S M Abdur Rob, Sammito Samajik Andolon, Bangladesh Bar Council, Sammito Samajik Jote, the Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh, Ain-O-Salish Kendra, Manabik Shahajaya Sangstha, Bangla Academy, National Bar Association of Bangladesh, Legal Education and Training Institute, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and Bangladesh Khetmajoor Samity, among others, issued separate condolence messages expressing grief over the death.

## Environment court

FROM PAGE 1  
The bills were introduced in the House on July 9 seeking to ensure speedy trial and quick disposal of cases pending in different courts. The bills were sent to the standing committee for scrutiny.

Chairman of the standing committee, Khondoker Mahub Uddin Ahmad, placed the reports on the bills.

In the statement of object of the first bill, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the cases in the environment courts were less in number while other courts could not dispose of cases due to overcrowding. This scenario could be put to an end by enabling the environment courts to dispense criminal and civil cases pending in other courts, he added.

of the Shazneen rape case. Special public prosecutors ABM Shaheedul Kha Mukul, Mahub Ahmed and Arfan Uddin Khan appeared for the state and advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajal, Mizanur Rahman and MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam defended the accused.

The trial of the case began on July 9, 2000.

## Coast Guard

FROM PAGE 12  
poachers have killed off precious wildlife resources of the world's largest mangrove forest including the famous Royal Bengal tiger and the spotted deer.

Forest department officials and employees work in a very insecure environment as the ill-equipped forest guards are no match for the 15 or more organised groups of heavily armed pirates and bandits who rule the roost in the forest. Hardly a day goes by without incidents of piracy, robbery or poaching. Recently, criminals threatened to loot arms from forest guards, said a senior official of the forest department.

## Cross-exam

FROM PAGE 12  
Superintendent of Police (ASP), CID, Mojibur Rahman to appear before it on that day.

During the cross-examination, Maksudur Rahman Patwari said he followed the rules and procedures while recording the confessional statements of the accused Minu on July 1, 1998.

Earlier, the victim's father Latifur Rahman and 20 others were cross-examined.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Ltd., was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case the following day with the Gulshan Police Station (PS) accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at the house.

ASP Mojibur Rahman filed the rape case with the Gulshan PS accusing seven people including Shahid on September 4, 1998.

The Shazneen murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, was earlier stayed on an order of the High Court (HC) Division. The HC order will remain valid till disposal