The Daily Star



US Senate panel reviews |Kibria family intelligence on Iran

REUTERS, Washington

US senators have launched a review of US intelligence on Iran to try to avoid pitfalls that marked the path to the invasion of Iraq, the Los Angeles Times said.

"We have to be more preemptive on this committee to try to look ahead and determine our capabilities so that you don't get stuck with a situation like you did with Iraq," Republican Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee was quoted as saying

In his State of the Union address on Wednesday, President Bush called Iran "the world's primary state sponsor of terror" and repeated accusations that Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran has denied those charges and says its nuclear program is

FROM PAGE 1

aimed solely at generating power for civilian use

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in London on Friday that

an attack on Iran was not on the agenda "at this point in time." The aim of the Senate review, Roberts said, is to ensure that any weaknesses in American intelli-

gence on Iran are being disclosed to policymakers, and that US spy agencies have adequate resources to fill gaps in collecting information on the Islamic republic," the Los Angeles Times said

Sen. John Rockefeller of West Virginia, the top Democrat on the committee, said in a statement cited by the paper: "One of the lessons we arned from Irag was not to take all information at face value and to ask more questions in the beginning than in the end." The Bush administration based

its case for the invasion of Iraq mainly on the alleged threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

> In a harshly critical report in July, the Senate Intelligence Committee said US intelligence agencies overstated the Iraqi threat, relied on dubious sources and ignored contrary evidence in the run-up to the war

Roberts said the review would take place largely behind closed doors, and that it was in its early stages, the Times said in the article posted on its Web site late on Friday.

It quoted committee aides as saying the review was not a formal investigation and that there were no plans to make its findings public. A CIA official said the agency

None of 104

specialist mountain rescue teams

Saturday while helicopters clat-

There were a number of foreign-

In September, an Antonov-24

operated by the airline slewed off

the runway while landing in Kabul,

slightly injuring some of the 27

passengers aboard, apparently

In early 1998, 51 people died

when an Antonov transport plane

operated by state-run Ariana

Afghan Airlines crashed in moun-

after engine trouble.

killod

ers among the 96 passengers,

would help in the review, the paper said.

FROM PAGE 12

of Shapiri Ghar.

tered overhead.

organization.

to the area

eign investigation agencies like FBI,

Interpol and Scotland Yard, and the

agencies should work without any

communities to raise their voices

against the killing, Asma said, "I

request my friends here and in the

expatriate communities across the

She said an international plat-

global campaign against the brutal

her daughter will co-ordinate the

campaign. "We must build up an

upsurge of public opinion with the

campaign that will include writing

Urging expatriate Banaladeshi

government interference."

resources to help us."

FROM PAGE 1

letters and making telephone calls She said. "We've no trust in the local to elected people's representatives probe teams. We have been asking of every country," she explained. and are asking again to invite for-

Asma also called upon all, irrespective of party affiliation, to join the silent protest programmes at district headquarters of the country on February 12 and those by expatriate Bangladeshis across the world the next day.

She also urged every community to set up a committee to co-ordinate its actions to bring the killers of world to use all their strength and Kibria to justice. Kibria's daughter Nazli Kibria

and daughter-in-law Rina Sultana form will be formed to launch a Kibria also spoke at the briefing **REZA MRIDUBHASHAN** murder and seeking justice, adding

EDITOR Reza has taken over as the editor of Mridubhashan, the weekly his father owned and edited

A comment of Momin made after

After the two had been admitted to

Habiganj Sadar Hospital for treatment,

Momin visited them there the next day

While talking to them, Momin suddenly

has cleared the path for Quaiyum Bhai

things. Momin said he made a mistake

and then shut up, said a witness

Daily Star they spent the Eid holidays

with their extended family in Habigan

and then returned to Dhaka, adding

one day later, her husband again went

On Quiyum's electoral ambitions

Afroza said, "He didn't have such

wishes. He is a politician. He harmed

no one. I don't see any reason why he

attack. He doesn't even have a

3 Guantanamo

to Habigani for a family purpose.

Quaiyum's wife Afroza told The

to become an MP

requesting anonymity.

licensed firearm."

detainees

ordered

told them. 'The death of Kibria Shaheb

Cops pick up BNP leader

associate Quaiyum with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her son instructions to pick him up to ask him

blind about his husband's whereabouts after the detention.

The Daily Star investigation, Quaiyum An Afghan Defense Ministry considered a suspect in the spokesman identified the crash Baidderbazar attack that left five site as being near Band-e Ghazi, a persons killed including AL MP and village overlooked by the mountain former finance minister ŠAMS Kibria. More than 1,000 Afghan sol-

the investigators are convinced about his involvement in the gruesome diers were joined by around 100 Nato ground troops scouring the attack he will be arrested. mountainous, snow-bound area on

Sources said statements of arrested Habiganj BNP activists Shah Alam and Jainal Abedin Jalal and Lashkarpur union Ward 2 BNP Secretary Momin brought the investigators' focus on Quaiyum.

including nine Turks, three His involvement in the incident was American aid workers, an Italian also suspected, as he had launched a naval captain, two other Italians campaign in Baidderbazar announcing himself as the prospective BNP and an Iranian working for an candidate in the next general elections international non-governmental a few days before the attack.

Talking to The Daily Star on Six of the eight crew were also Thursday and Friday, a cross section of people in Baidderbazar and the adjacent unions said, a few days before the fatal rally day, Quaiyum visited and went around the locality seeking co-operation from all as the next BNP MP candidate.

They said local leaders of BNP and would be involved in the grenade its mass-organisations, including the arrested Shah Alam, Jalal and Momin, accompanied and assisted Quaiyum during his visit.

"A couple of days before the grenade attack, at around 8:00pm, I was closing my shop, when a person came and hugged me. He said his name is Quaiyum. He was accompanied by some BNP leaders including Momin and Sultan," said Asker Ali, owner of a tea stall and organising secretary of Ward 10 Unit of Lashkarpur Union Jubo League.

released Ali said, "They [the accompanying leaders] told me he [Quaiyum] is our AP, San Juan, Puerto Rico leader. There is every chance that he The US military has ordered three will contest in the next election. Please take note of this." But, he said, "I've detainees at the US prison camp in never seen Quaiyum in this area Guantanamo Bay to be freed and 25

In March that year, 45 people before.

Hasina urges Major Indian dailies all to observe **FROM PAGE 1** act of panic than a well thought out hartal strategy

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina vesterday urged people to observe today's countrywide hartal and hasten the 'fall' of the ruling coalition.

"If this government hangs on to power, public misery will worsen. People desperately want to get rid of the suffocation caused by corruption, terrorism and price-hike under the alliance government," she said in a statement to the press.

the long run, the viability of the Criticising what she said were Saarc as an organisation will attacks by police and BNP cadres depend upon its ability to respond to on opposition workers during hartal. such crises. It is not a good sign if summits fold up at the sign of politi-Hasina, also Awami League president, cautioned that the government cal crisis in one of the member would not be able to avert its fall by states." the editorial said. resorting to repression. have also frittered away an opportu-

She said it is the constitutional and democratic right of the people to hold meetings and procession. But the alliance government "trampled people's democratic rights by letting loose the police and its armed cadres".

Hasina mentioned police action on her party's women workers at Arambagh in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. "The scale of repression leads one to believe that the government declared war against the commoners," she said and cautioned that the people of this country would not tolerate such 'inhuman repression'

surate with India's power and aspi-The opposition leader urged the rations. It is difficult to imagine that government to refrain from such act. failing which, she warned, the cannot even manage multilateral government will be held responsible forms with its neighbors effectively. for any 'new situation' arising out of By cancelling the summit, we have that. our own inability to deal with our

Hartals strike Several people nearby heard this FROM PAGE 1 comment of his and one of them even already cancelled their trips," he admonished him not to say such

said. Many garment factories also could not run their production in full swing as factory spaces were clogged with produced goods for days.

"The goods are ready to be shipped out. But I could not ship those out for hartals. I had no way but to pile the packed items up on my production floor," said Mir Mohammad Faruque, chairman of Jointex, a knit factory in the capital.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Kutubuddin Ahmed warned of an impending disaster to the economy that was peaking up.

"We businesspeople don't want killings. But we also don't support hartal," he said. "We've seen a lot of hartals in the past. But does it do any bad to those against whom the strikes were called?"

"The container congestion at the port reached record high.. the businesses are coming to a standstill .. vegetables and other supply of essentials are not coming from villages to Dhaka ... buyers are reluctant to come to Bangladesh.. what are we getting in return for this nonstop hartal?" the MCCI boss asked in frustration.

The Chittagong Port authorities

Bangladesh and Nepal.

Saarc."

"India has cited two reasons for

not attending the summit: The deteriorating security situation in

Bangladesh and the recent turn of

events in Nepal. Both reasons are

not sufficient to warrant postpone-

ment of the summit. And the fact that

they were cited together only makes

the signals India is trying to send

cancelling the summit is the state of

emergency in Nepal. But this event

is all the more reason to convene a

meeting of the SAARC. After all, in

"By cancelling the summit, we

nity to improve relations with

Bangladesh. Relations with

Bangladesh have been very diffi-

cult, but there had been signs of a

breakthrough. Bangladesh's willing-

ness to discuss a pipeline from Myanmar was a positive sign. A

Saarc summit at this point would

have been an opportunity to give

this small opening further momen-

tum. Instead, India has embittered

Dhaka even more," the newspaper

cellation has been handled sug-

gests that the Indian foreign policy

diplomatic culture that is commen-

India will be a significant power if it

weakened the Saarc and projected

In a commentary titled "Dhaka's

pipeline tit for Delhi's tat' on February 4, The Statesman of

Kolkata writes, "Upset over Idnia's

withdrawal from the Saarc summit,

there is an apprehension that

Bangladesh may not participate in

nation gas pipeline on 14 February.'

a report by Indrani Bagchi on February 4, "In the wake of the

postponed Saarc summit, Pakistan

s getting ready to fish in the troubled

waters of soured relations between

India and its smaller neighbours

neighbours," the editorial said.

establishment does not have a

"The manner in which the can-

said.

"The proximate cause of

more obscure," the daily said.

The Kolkata-based widely circulated Bangla daily Anandabazar Patrika in a report headlined 'Delhi trying to garner support for Saarc-decision'. on February 4 said. "Delhi is now trying to strengthen its grouping to avoid difficulties after wrecking the Saarc summit. - Pakistan has clearly said, violence is going on in different corners of the globe. So cancellation of the summit does not make any sense citing violence in any particular area as a pretext.-----China has also criticised India in a roundabout way by saying that the South Asian nations were doing well and she also wanted to join the

"India has created more problems than it has resolved through its decision not to participate in the Saarc summit," the Asian Age, an nfluential India daily, in its Friday's editorial said.

The newspaper published both from New Delhi and Kolkata said. 'The reasons ostensibly are the security situation in Bangladesh and the political turmoil spelling an end to democracy in Nepal."

The newspaper said, "India cannot but be concerned about these issues but the question that has led to widespread resentment in the region whether India should have held the Saarc hostage to these considerations.'

Continuing the paper wrote: "In fact, South Asia suffers from a major security problem and if it is not Bangladesh today, it could be Sri Lanka tomorrow, and perhaps even India the day after. Saarc then becomes even more relevant today and efforts should have been made by New Delhi to ensure that the spirit" of the South Asian process does not become subservient to bilateral politics."

The Asian Age also published a story on Friday where Pakistan foreign minister Khursheed Mehmood Kasuri expressed his disappointment over India's decision to opt out of the Saarc summit saying this would have a "negative impact on India-Pakistan relations".

the meeting of the technical-He said such regional meetings commercial working committee to were important to create the goodpropose the route for the threewill necessary to sustain the peace process. The Times of India commented in "It is important that our spirits are

high and this decision has had a dampening effect and can be counterproductive." he added. (See The Asian Age editorial on

private companies. At the moment

the government has a stock of 6.49

lakh tonnes of food grains in its silos,

of which 5.06 lakh tonnes are rice

government requires greater food

reserves, said a high official of the

ministry, explaining this is the rea-

son for not starting OMS this month.

coarse rice is being sold at Tk 17 per

kilogram in the northern districts.

while in southern districts medium

According to newspaper reports

To start OMS at this moment the

and 1.42 tonnes are wheat.

page Page-3)

Rice prices spiral

FROM PAGE 1 that farmers deserve to receive some benefit from the higher price of rice in the market.

Otherwise, farmers will lose interest in cultivating rice due to a lack of

cost effectiveness, the source said. Another source in the ministry however, told The Daily Star that the minister and deputy minister of the food ministry held a close door meeting with prime minister Khaleda Zia last week, reviewing the production of food, stocks, market position and all relevant

lakh tonnes of rice. and also to give

necessary subsidies this time when

The lowest offer for rice imports

was \$269 per tonne from private

Indian companies, while public

sector Indian companies quoted

government would buy rice from the

In view of the \$10 difference, the

OMS begins.

pointed out.

imported from India

\$279 dollars per tonne.

Over 100 injured and anti-hartal activists at Bhairab. autorickshaw and a human haulier at Our Mymensingh correspondent Green Road at about 10:00am and reported that at least 10 people set fire to an autorickshaw of the daily

including an assistant sub-inspector Ingilab at Goran at about 8:00am of police, two BNP activists and Some leaders of the AL and its front organisations including Tofail Ahmed, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin Asaduzzaman Noor, MP, Sultan Monsur Ahmed, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Mirza Azam, MP and Pankai Debnath staged a sit-in in front of Muktijoddha Sangsad for half an hour.

AL lawmakers and other leaders and workers of the party brought out a procession from the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at about 11:00am.The procession paraded Mirpur Road chanting slogans in support of the hartal. The participants later held a rally at Russell Square.

Police tried to pick up an opposition worker in a police van when the procession reached Russell Square, but AL lawmakers resisted it. During the scuffle, police allegedly misbehaved with lawmaker Sohel Taz. **OTHER PLACES**

Our staff correspondent in Chittagong adds: At least four journalists and 15 hartal supporters were injured as police charged baton on them in front of the AL office at Darul

Fazal Market during hartal hours. The injured journalists are Staff Reporter Komol Dey of Bhorer Kagoj, Staff Reporter Shantanu Chowdhury of Suprabhat Bangladesh, Staff Photographer Mohammad Faruk of Daily Ăzadi and Staff Photographer

of Jugantar Didarul Alam. Local journalists instantly staged a demonstration denouncing the incident and demanded punishment of those involved in the attack.

The incident occurred as journalists were covering an AL procession. A report from Kishoreganj said at least 15 people were injured in a

seven others were injured in a clash between two processions of the AL and BNP in Nandail upazila. Of the injured, Shafiqul Islam Bhuivan and Maiharul Hague Ratan of Jubo Dal were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital

reports: Pickets damaged a motorbike and police arrested two prohartal pickets.

reports: At least 20 people including three policemen were injured in clashes between police and pro-

JALIL'S BRIEFING

press briefing in the city yesterday evening said police and ruling alliance loyalists attacked peaceful demonstrations by opposition men in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country. domestic routes

Rangamati, Jalil alleged.

enforce tougher programmes to meet our demand for resignation of

Our Jessore correspondent

Our Nilphamari correspondent

hartal activists

cadres attacked both male and female workers of the AL in Ashashuni of Satkhira. Bhairab ir Kishoreganj, Narsingdi, Noakhali,

Like the previous autocratic regimes, the present alliance government will also not be able to cling to power through torture and repression, he said

"Fall of the alliance government is inevitable in the face of the current united movement," Jalil said. "We will

foreigners, four of them Russian, the Russian Interfax news agency said. The plane was leased from a AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil at a company in Kyrgyzstan. Kam Air opened as Afghanistan's only private airline in November 2003. It flies leased aircraft between Kabul, Dubai and Istanbul and operates several

Police and government-backed Joypurhat, Khulna, Laxmipur and

tains near the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta after failing to land in Afghanistan because of bad weather

FROM PAGE 1 taking him. They just said they have

Tarek Rahman. some questions. She said she was completely in the Kibria's assassination first ignited suspicion of the law enforcers.

Except Momin all his family mem-According to several sources and a bers are either AL supporters or activists, said his brother Jashimuddin Ahmed alias Siddik Ali. They were in the January 27 rally and Siddik Ali and a nephew of his were injured in the attack

A source said, after guizzing him, if

clash between hartal supporters the government.

PRSP aims

FROM PAGE 1

the PRSP.

The inflation rate that rose steadily in the last few years started showing a higher rate of increase since last September after devastating floods hit the country during July-August causing a huge damage to crops

While setting the alternative projections, the government has also considered the possible impact of the new pay scale for government employees on the inflation, sources at the Planning Ministry said.

They said the PRSP, which is likely to be finalised by the next month, will have two sets of threeyear macroeconomic projections -one that was made public early last month, and the latest one.

Apart from the negative impacts of the floods and the governmentimposed price hike of diesel and gas, the new projections recognise the higher food prices in both domestic and international markets.

Food, especially rice, accounts for 70 to 80 percent of the inflation basket and the price of rice keeps on spiralling at home and abroad, a Planning Ministry source said explaining its impact on inflation.

Due to the crop damage caused by the floods, the government failed to achieve the target of aman production. And now it faces another challenge in boro cultivation as diesel price hike is hampering irrigation.

The price of diesel was raised by Tk 3 per litre on the advice of the donors who want more hike. But this hike has already left an impact on the economy as diesel is widely used for irrigation, transportation and some power generation.

The government in the fresh macroeconomic projections also considered higher costs of import as the commodity price on the international market has marked a sharp rise in the recent months.

Moreover, taka is steadily getting weaker against dollar. The greenback is now selling at around Tk 64, as against Tk 59 to Tk 60 a few months ago.

"On the advice of the finance minister, we have framed the alter-

native projections. We will keep both in the PRSP. If we can achieve the alternative targets, it will be good for us," said a Planning Ministry source

"The present situation will not permit a lesser inflation as it was expected before. The impact of commodity price hike can not be avoided," he added.

HIGHER GDP, EXPORTS The government however in its updated draft pens down higher hopes for exports and the GDP growth target for fiscal years 2004-05 to 2006-07.

The export growth target has been revised at 12 percent from 7 percent projected earlier. The GDP growth target has been set at 6.8 percent for 2006-07 instead of 6.5 percent. The donor funded PRSP being

framed with an action plan to reduce poverty level chalked out a set of projections back in December. But these were criticised for being partly out of context.

Critics said these were framed in the way the donors wanted the government to do and needed a vision to reflect the realities.

The PRSP Cell of the Planning Ministry in collaboration with the Finance Division and the Bangladesh Bank then framed the alternative projections. Sources said, by March the PRSP will be adopted by the government.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) that is hammering the PRSP has been predicting a slide in the country's exports in the post-MFA era from this year. Accordingly, the IMF prescribed

projection in December last year showed a 9 percent export growth for the current fiscal, 6 percent for the next year and 7 percent for the third year.

But in reality, exports grew by 19 percent during July-October period this fiscal year. Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association also believes the country will not face much difficulty. This has prompted the government to revise the export growth target.

a mountain near Kabul. In the most recent air crash in Afghanistan, three US military personnel and three civilian crew were killed when a US transport aircraft crashed in central mountains in November.

BSF kills 357 FROM PAGE 12

from 2000 to 2004.

Odhikar has compiled these iqures from different media reports.

It alleged the BSF killed most of the innocent Bangladeshi farmers in different bordering areas without any provocation.

Despite holding of a number of flag meetings between the BSF and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), violation of human rights along the border has not ceased. the report said.

Besides, a severe humanitaran crisis prevails on both sides due to continuous push-in attempts by the BSF. the Odhikar report added.

PM donates

FROM PAGE 1 families of the victims in the investi-

gation The prime minister asked the children of the victims to continue

their studies. She directed the local administration, including the deputy commissioner (DC) and the union parishad (UP) chairman concerned, to take proper care of the victim families and take steps so that their children can get job on completion of their studies.

Fatema Khatun, the eldest daughter of Abdur Rahim and a

student of class X, was also present. The members of the bereaved

families expressed gratitude to the prime minister for inviting them and providing them with assistance. Earlier, the local administration

had provided the families with assistance in cash and kind to meet their urgent requirements.

Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury Deputy Commissioner of Habigan Emdadul Huq and local UP Chairman Amzad Hossian were present.

AL President Mohammad Ali plane, a Boeing 727, slammed into Munshi of the same ward told The Daily Star, "I heard that one Quaiyum visited the area in a Pajero [jeep] on an election campaign two or three days before our rally. I heard BNP's Shah Alam accompanied him and that Quaiyum's village home is in [the nearby] Gopaya union's Bhadoi

village Quaiyum also held a party meeting on Baidderbazar Government Primary School premises where the fateful AL rally was held later.

Travelling the 15km from Habiganj town to Baidderbazar one sees many graffiti painted on the roadside walls before that visit of Quaivum.

"We want Quaivum Bhai to contest in the parliament election from Habiganj-Lakhai area," reads one of them on the wall of Gopaya union Jubo Unnavan directorate office

On another wall, a scrawl adorned with the BNP election symbol, sheaf of paddy, says, "Saifur Rahman says Quaivum Bhai is the most competent leader." Some other wall writings

were held into the cases of more terror suspects. Hearings were held Friday for

two detainees before the Administrative Review Boards, which can free prisoners if they determine they no longer pose a threat to the United States or hold significant intelligence value.

others to remain as secret hearings

So far, 22 such hearings have taken place at Guantanamo, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Daryl Borgquist, a Pentagon spokesman. The has refused to provide any details or allow media access to the proceedings. The Administrative Review

Board hearings started as the military wrapped up the Combatant Status Review Tribunals, which were intended solely to determine whether detainees were properly held as "enemy combatants," a classification they were given when they were captured and one that affords fewer legal protections than the Geneva Conventions

Burn injury patients

FROM PAGE 12

burn cases in winter is attributed to various ways of warming up to fight almost doubles in the winter. Most of cold. the victims catch fire while trying to Poor patients are the worst

sufferers in such a situation as the cost of treatment of burn cases in private clinics is about three times that in public hospitals.

"I had to spend Tk 35,000 in three days for treatment of my wife Kahinoor Begum for burns at a private hospital at Panthapath." said Abdul Alim.

A physician at the DMCH burn unit said similar treatment at the public hospital costs about Tk 10.000.

"Around 15 burn patients come to the DMCH every day for admission but we can admit only five to six of them." he said on condition of anonymity. Besides, 20 to 40 patients are given primary treatment at the burn unit daily.

Dr Samanta Lal Sen, project director of burn unit, said out of 13 medical college hospitals in the country, only the DMCH has such a unit, and rush of patients is naturally very high.

He suggested introduction of burn unit in each medical college to reduce pressure on the DMCH and ensure proper treatment of the crowded burn unit.

are working extra hours to ease congestion but no delivery could be made due to the countrywide strikes. About 17,000 TEUs (Twenty

Equivalent Units) of goods were lying on the port sheds yesterday against the capacity of 13,500 TĔUs.

Only two feeder vessels, with 588 TÉUs and 226 TEUs, left the port yesterday and two others arrived with 800 TEUs of goods.

BSF kills 1 FROM PAGE 1

In Comilla, a gang of 12 Indian miscreants entered Natapara village under Chouddagram upazila and kidnapped Shah Alam, 14.

Police Superintendent Aurangazeb Mahbub said the Indian miscreants entered the village, attacked the house of Nona Mia and abducted his son. Nona Mia and his wife, Sahena Akter, were injured in the attack. They are now undergoing treatment at a clinic in Comilla town.

Dhaka peacekeepers FROM PAGE 12

Major General Akbar informed

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of the peacekeeping mission in Sudan. The premier has assured the force commander of all types of support needed to strengthen the peacekeeping.

burners or burning abandoned "Our troops are now preparing to participate in the peacekeeping mission in Sudan." former army chief and Defence Adviser to the prime minister Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star vesterday.

Nearly 1.7 million people have been displaced since rebels took up arms last year and thousands of people in Sudanese villages are getting raped and killed in what the UN has termed the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Pleased with the performance of the Bangladeshi soldiers, the UN has asked for more troops in Sudan peacekeeping mission.

Currently, 7,816 members of Bangladesh Army are serving in 12 UN peacekeeping missions in different countries. Besides, the air force and the navy are also participating in the peacekeeping operations

In last 16 years, Bangladesh earned Tk 4,600 crore by contributing 40,793 soldiers -- nearly half the total troops in Bangladesh Army -- to 31 UN peacekeeping missions.

guality rice is being sold at Tk 18 pe issues. At the meeting it was kilogram. Earlier the price varied decided to start OMS after completbetween Tk 14-16 per kilogram. ing the necessary collection of 2.5

Md Shahjahan, a retail trader in Chawkbazar, Chittagong, attributed the hike in rice prices to importproblems, hartals and the rise of the

The government has already dollar price against taka. given orders to collect one lakh "We are selling a few types of rice tonnes of rice from the local market. now for Tk 18 to Tk 20 per kg, when with the rest of the food grain to be they sold at Tk 13 per kg even 10-12 davs ago." he said.

Private and government organi-Shahjahan said the irri rice has sations of India have participated in increased from Tk 600 to Tk 900 per the tender call and the government sack while beti rice increased from will present purchase orders within Tk 650-700 to Tk 900-950. the next couple of days, the sources

The government started OMS before Eid-ul-Fitr specifically to address flood effected poor people. Around 30,000 tonnes of rice were sold through the monthlong OMS during September-October last vear, with the price of rice set at Tk 13 per kilogram.

12 Iraqis, 4 US soldiers

FROM PAGE 1

Attacks are seldom in this Shiadominated city, but extremist Sunni Arab organisations have vowed to target the majority Shia community, which is expected to obtain a crushing victory in last Sunday's elections.

Two children were killed when a landmine exploded Saturday in the restive Sunni city of Samarra, north of Baghdad, security and medical sources said.

Two Iraqi soldiers were also killed in a roadside bomb attack in the same city, which US-led troops had raided in October in a bid to clean it of insurgents ahead of the landmark elections.

Also Saturday, an Iraqi police commander said 11 of his officers were missing after their convoy was ambushed this week in a western Baghdad suburb. Insurgents killed five policemen and an Iragi National Guard major in the Thursday attack.

Meanwhile, an Islamist militant group gave Rome a 72-hour deadline to withdraw its soldiers from Iraq, saying it had kidnapped an Italian woman journalist in Baghdad, in a statement posted on the Internet on Friday.

The authenticity of the statement, issued in the name of the so-called Islamic Jihad Organisation, could not be independently verified.

"The journalist's kidnapping is nothing other than a message to the Italian government, led by Prime Minister (Silvio) Berlusconi that you will never be secure as long as you have a soldier in Iraq, it said.

"We give the Italian government 72 hours to recall its troops from Irag or else we will communicate other messages to you." it added, giving no further details.

Hartal FROM PAGE 1

2:00pm on hartal days.

He demanded immediate withdrawal of the policemen involved in brutal action on peaceful hartal activists in the city. He said 45 people, including two former Awam League ministers, Mosharraf Hossain and M A Mannan, were assaulted by the police and 72 pickets were arrested.

Business people here said another spell of hartal will have a serious impact on the country's economy. Six days of countrywide hartal in two phases after the killing of Awami League leader SAMS Kibria and four others in grenade attack in Habiganj on January 27 had already congested the port. Loading, unloading and delivery of goods from the port remained suspended during the hartal.

papers, a physician mentioned. "I sat close to the gas burner at our house to fight cold recently and suddenly my sari caught fire," said 30-year-old Safia Begum of Mijmiji village of Siddhirganj upazila in

The number of burn patients

warm up by using oven and gas

Narayanganj. The woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy with about 40 percent of lower part of her body burnt was rushed to the DMCH but the hospital authorities could not admit her due to lack of accommo-

dation. They gave her primary treatment. As her condition deteriorated. Safia again came to the DMCH after six days and managed

to get a space on the floor. Eight-year-old Muslima alias Sumona, a domestic help in Uttara, came to the DMCH with severe burns in her leas. She suffered burns while warming up beside a oven. She also had to go back after primary treatment as there was no vacant seat at the already over-