

## SANGSAD FIRE Probe body fails to submit report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inquiry committee on Saturday's "mysterious" fire inside the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban failed to submit its report yesterday amid questions about its effectiveness due to the inclusion of the top security officer in the probe body.

Parliament Secretariat officials said miscreants got the opportunity to set fire to three places inside the parliament building due to negligence of the security forces. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar also echoed them.

Inclusion of Sergeant-at-Arms Captain Mohammad Faruk, in-charge of parliament security, in the investigation committee has aroused doubts over the effectiveness of the probe body.

The speaker, however, said the inclusion of the security officer will not influence investigation. "I will take action if any negligence is

## Gathering ban in tense Kansat

HC prohibits arrest or harassment of power-hungry villagers, asks govt to explain firings

STAR REPORT

Shibganj upazila administration yesterday banned any gathering in and around Kansat invoking Section 144, while the High Court in an ad-interim rule prohibited detention or harassment of any Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP) member outside legal provisions.

The HC rule came on a PIL (public interest litigation) petition filed by ZI Khan Panna as chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council's Human Rights and Legal Aid Committee in the wake of persis-

tent violence and unrest in five Chapainawabganj unions including Kansat. Thursday's PBUSP-BNP battle was the latest in a series of violent incidents that so far has killed 14 people and injured scores of others over a simple demand of villagers for uninterrupted power supply to those unions.

The court yesterday asked the government to explain in three weeks time why it should not be ordered to pay adequate compensations to the families of the violence victims.

The rule also wants the government and the local administration

and power-supply authorities to rationalise why they should not be directed to ensure a minimum supply of electricity to the restive area at night.

The home secretary, inspector general of police, deputy commissioner and police super of Chapainawabganj, officer-in-charge of Shibganj Police Station, Rural Electrification Board, and Palli Bidyut Samity are the respondents in the case.

They have to explain why the January 4 and January 23 police firings on demonstrating villagers

## SAARC US, Korea can't attend next summit

Standing committee  
meets tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Afghanistan will join the next Saarc summit in New Delhi as the eighth member of the association while China and Japan will attend as observers.

But the US and South Korea, who sought observer status with SAARC, will not be able to attend as they need approval by the summit leaders.

"We have received formal requests from the United States and South Korea seeking observer status with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc). But at this point, it would not be possible for the two countries to attend the 14th summit as their entries need

## NCB REFORMS

## Tk 96cr consultation goes down the drain

WB rebukes govt for such wastage of IDA-lent funds

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The World Bank (WB) has expressed dissatisfaction at the government for not implementing the recommendations of three foreign firms it commissioned as management consultants to revamp three nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) for a total of Tk 96 crore fee.

"The fees and costs incurred in hiring these consultants cannot be justified unless their recommendations are implemented to improve the financial condition of these banks," a WB mission observed late last month in a report to the

finance ministry.

The consultants were hired under the Enterprise Growth and Bank Management Project aimed at reforming the banking sector and funded by International Development Association (IDA), the soft-loan wing of the WB.

In the forwarding letter of the report, WB Country Director Christine Wallich wrote, "IDA may be compelled to cancel the consultations in the NCBs if satisfactory progress is not realized within the agreed timelines."

The government in 2004 appointed International Business and Technology Consultant Inc,

USA, as a consultant to Sonali Bank for Tk 24 crore, and Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) of Hong Kong to Agrani Bank and International Development Ireland Ltd (IDI) to Janata Bank for Tk 36 crore each.

The WB mission early last month took stock of the progress the consultants had made toward reforming the NCBs. But, it found most of their recommendations for restructuring the banks had not been carried out.

The top two prescriptions ignored are vesting the NCBs with operational autonomy by February 28, and replacing their incumbent

## US lobbyists hired for image building, 'positive' reporting

They are to ensure 'balanced reporting on Bangladesh' among a waft of tasks

STAR REPORT

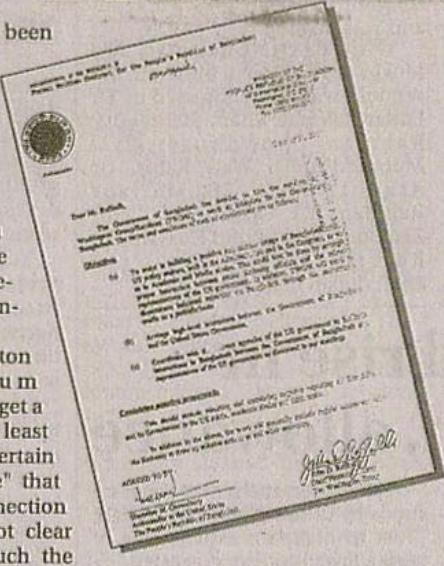
The government has appointed three American lobbyists including an individual and two firms to arrange high-level interactions with the US government and build a "positive and correct image" of Bangladesh among the US policymakers.

The lobbyists have also been assigned to ensure "balanced reporting on Bangladesh" through mainstream media. They will coordinate with the relevant agencies of the US government to facilitate interactions in Bangladesh between the government and the representatives of the US government.

The firms, The Washington Group and Ketchum Washington (TWG/K), will get a monthly retainer fee of at least \$45,000 in addition to "certain out of pocket expenditure" that TWG/K will incur in connection with the services. It is not clear from documents how much the

individual lobbyist, Richard L. Benkin, will get.

The contract signed on October 31 last year for an initial period of six months between the Bangladesh embassy in Washington and the lobbyists however said "efforts will be



## Govt covering up its corruption by corrupt measure

Saber tells press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday said the ruling alliance has "secretly" appointed a lobbyist group in the US to cover up government corruption by "another corrupt measure".

"The BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government is spending public money on the lobbyist group only for its political and personal interest," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

Addressing a press conference at the AL Dhanmondi office, Saber said the government wants a US certificate to regain power and is spending taxpayers' money for that. "But it must keep in mind that only people and the voters of this country will give such a certificate," he said.

Comparing the government's "conspiracy of election engineering" to the "tip of the iceberg", the frontline AL leader suspected that the government might have more such hidden deals with the US lobbyists so that they can play roles in favour of the coalition government in the election year.

The image of the BNP-Jamaat government is tarnished due to rise of militant groups under their "direct" shelter, unabated corruption by alliance loyalists, human rights violations and slide in law and order, Saber said.



Shahriar Nafees takes off his helmet and raises his bat to the jubilant spectators after reaching three figures against Australia on day one of the first Test at Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

## CEC says rule doesn't say how they committed contempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and ruling BNP lawmaker Nurul Islam Moni in reply to the Supreme Court's suo moto contempt rule yesterday said the rule does not explain how they had committed contempt of court.

Submitting petitions separately before the full bench of the Appellate Division yesterday, they urged the court not to bring contempt proceedings against them.

Chaired by Chief Justice Syed JR

## Nafees stars in Tigers' terrific day in Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees cracked a magnificent maiden century as the Tigers at heart enjoyed the best field day in Test cricket at the Fatullah Stadium on Sunday.

It was also a rare sight in modern day Test where the bottom-ranked Bangladesh dominated the much-vaunted Australian attack to pile up 355-5 at stumps, a figure that other eight Test nations could envy.

The fabulous score at the fifth

## MORGUE IN MESS DMCH bogs down with Home cases

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The home ministry, which needs the autopsies most for investigating into police cases and framing charges, displays an uncalled-for callousness in managing the post-mortem process.

According to DMCH sources, the Dhaka Medical College requires but one or two autopsy operations a day to teach its students. Instead, it has been shouldering the burden of conducting no less than 10 post-mortems a day at the behest of the home ministry for the last 60 years since 1946.

Once corners under the ministry used to carry out this task. So, it really is the ministry's responsibility to run the morgue, doctors at the DMCH forensic medical department point out. Besides dodging that responsibility, the ministry has made no financial

## Sangsad goes into session April 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad goes into session at 5:00pm on April 27.

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday summoned the 21st session of the House.

The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of parliament, headed by the speaker, is scheduled to meet half an hour before the session to decide about its duration and business.

Parliament sources said the

# Can't stop talking

When you have AKTEL **EXCEED**, it's not your fault.

**50% savings**  
from 2<sup>nd</sup> min

**৳1/min from 4 am - 6 am**  
from 2<sup>nd</sup> min

**Lowest rate to 3 FnF numbers**  
all day long

**Connection fee**

Pre-Paid **mobileLink** ৳ 350  
Mobile to Mobile

Pre-Paid **Standard** ৳ 750  
TAT Local, NWD and IDD Incoming & outgoing

সময় ভুলে

**AKTEL**  
GSM  
CLEARLY AHEAD  
এক শাপ এগিয়ে

**exceed**

কথা বলুন মন খুলে

Committed to keeping you clearly ahead

Detailed Tariff Plan on page 4