

Kennedy accuses Bush of divisive policies

REUTERS, Washington

Sen Edward Kennedy, the leading liberal voice in Congress, marked the midway point of President George W Bush's first term on Tuesday by accusing the administration of dividing America on matters from Iraq to civil rights.

With war looming and the economy ailing, the Massachusetts Democrat said the United States "must renew our sense of common purpose" at home and abroad. But Bush, he said, had driven Americans and their allies apart, citing the war on terrorism, Iraq, North Korea, education, health care and civil rights.

"Surely we can have effective relationships with other nations without adopting a chip-on-the-shoulder foreign policy," Kennedy said in a speech at the National Press Club.

"From World War II through the Cold War to the Gulf War, from Franklin Roosevelt to the first George Bush, we prevailed by building great coalitions for defense and democracy," said Kennedy.

"Today we are far from that standard," Kennedy said. "Our standing and support among the peoples of Europe and in other

lands abroad is at or near the lowest point in a half century."

While other top Democrats, particularly those challenging Bush for the White House, have denounced the president on a variety of fronts, Kennedy, 70, a senior member of the Senate where he has served 40 years, delivered perhaps the most comprehensive condemnation of his foreign and domestic policies.

"Both at home and overseas, we need policies that unite, not divide," Kennedy said.

During a question-and-answer period, Kennedy said, "I expect to support" Sen. John Kerry, a fellow Massachusetts Democrat, for their party's 2004 presidential nomination.

"I expect him to win," Kennedy said, adding Kerry had done "a great job" addressing many of these same issues.

Ripping into the administration for challenging the use of race in university admissions, Kennedy said: "An administration that takes such a course, whether out of conviction or political calculation, is no friend of minorities and no force for civil rights."

Meter 'monopoly'

FROM PAGE 12

ment of the DMP said, starting February 1, if drivers charge extra fare from passengers, proper actions would be taken including the cancellation of route permits of the vehicles concerned.

Moreover, failure to follow the guidelines by any driver may even result in his arrest.

To render further disciplined in the transport system, the traffic department has instructed drivers to wear uniform — navy blue trousers, bush shirt with their names embossed on the pocket and vehicle number on both shoulders, black shoes and belt.

However most drivers are unaware of the official developments regarding the changes.

Teesta talks

FROM PAGE 1

reach an agreement," said Faisal Ahmed Chowdhury, water resources secretary and leader of Bangladesh side. "This is a continuous process involving a lot of technical details. We will cover more grounds in the next meeting."

About the Bangladesh proposal for interim water-sharing of Teesta river, Goswami said, "It is not a question of acceptance or rejection. It's a process of negotiation."

During the talks, Bangladesh experts reiterated that the water-sharing issue should be resolved immediately based on a proposal they placed in August last.

At the committee's last meeting in New Delhi, Bangladesh proposed that the two countries should share Teesta water equally, leaving 30 per cent water for navigability.

However, according to meeting sources, the Indian delegation stood firm on its proposal for a scientific study before any deal.

Dhaka also pointed out that flow in the Ganges at Farakka point dropped substantially in the first 10 days of this month. It said India should take urgent steps to ensure flow to the level agreed in the 1996 water-sharing treaty.

Goswami told newsmen that droughts in 15 Indian states reduced flow and water levels in reservoirs of the drought-hit regions dipped to 59 per cent of last ten years' average.

"We are fully conscious of our obligation and responsibility under the Ganges water-sharing treaty," added Goswami.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 1

During the cross-examination, Shehzi told the court that all keys of her parents' house were with Hasan during the incident.

"We returned to my elder sister's Baridhara residence at Dhaka on April 16, 1998. My parents returned from Shillong on April 18, and took Shazneen from my sister's house," Shehzi told the court.

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

All the six accused—Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin—now in jail custody, were produced in the court yesterday during the cross-examination.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) Arfan Uddin Khan, Mahbub Ahmed, Saima Khanam and assistant PP Anisur Rahman appeared for the state, while advocates Mosharrif Hossain Kajol, Mohammad Hanif, Mizanur Rahman, Anwarul Kabir Babul and Abdus Salam Bhuiyan appeared for the accused.

Earlier, three prosecution witnesses, including the complainant of the case, were cross-examined.

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

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 12

the country from its terror-risk list and withdraw the immigration restrictions.

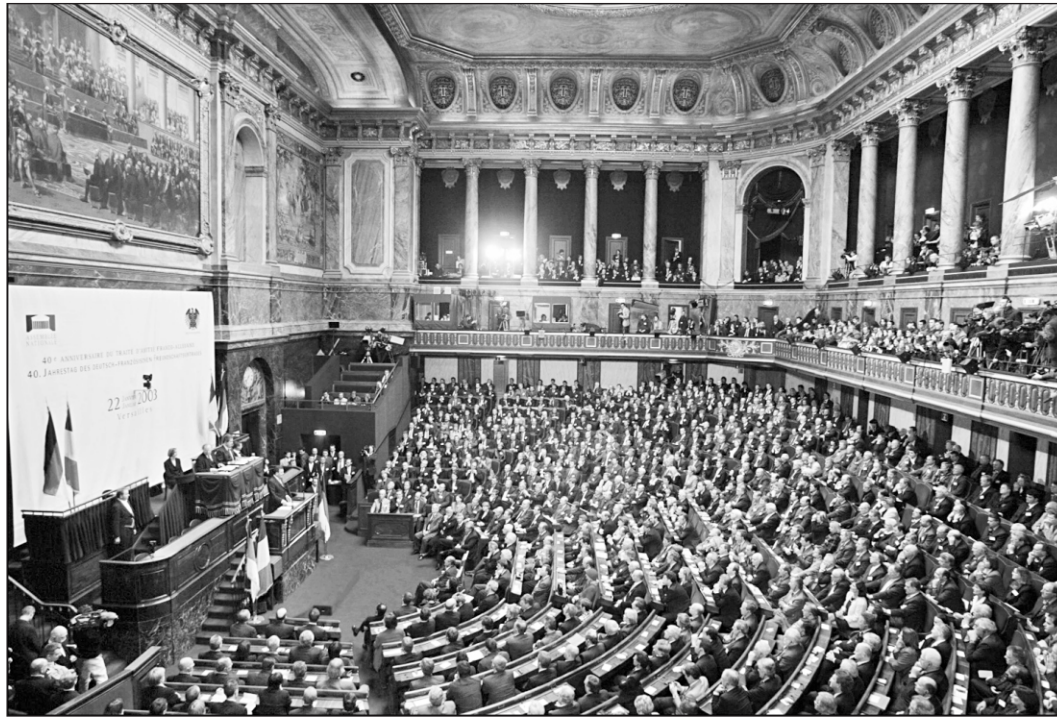
Turning to the industrial sector, the prime minister said her government would close down all losing concerns and set up new ones to create employment for the laid-off workers.

About closure of the Adamjee Jute Mills, she said the laid-off workers had been paid their dues and could start small-scale businesses of their own.

Besides, the government has plans to convert the mill area into an export processing zone or an information technology (IT) village that would create thousands of jobs.

BNP Parliamentary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, State Minister for Labour and Manpower Lutfar Rahman Khan Azad also addressed the meeting, presided over by Sramik Dal President and Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director Gopal Bhattacharya, Sri Lanka Minister for Housing and Plantation and General Secretary of the Ceylon Workers Congress SAR Thondaman, President of the Nepal Trade Union Centre Laxman Basnet and Representative of ICTU P Haridasan also spoke at the inaugural session.



German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder addresses the congressional chamber at the palace of Versailles yesterday, where about 900 deputies of the German Bundestag and of the French National Assembly hold their first-ever joint session of parliament during the festivities marking the 40th anniversary of the 1963 Franco-German Elysee Treaty.

France, Germany

FROM PAGE 12

fellow permanent Security Council members France and China by opposing immediate conflict.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said a majority of the five permanent council members, all of whom have veto power, now believed it was "indispensable" to pursue diplomatic efforts well beyond next Monday's progress report by the inspectors to the Security Council.

He also warned Washington against taking unilateral military action without explicit Security Council authorisation, saying this would "not only complicate the situation in the region but weaken the anti-terror coalition."

On Monday, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin had declared "nothing would justify" such an attack and suggested France could use its veto in the Security Council.

His Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan said the report should be seen as a "new beginning," not the end of the process.

In Baghdad, as arms experts carried out a 54th day of inspections in Iraq, a leading state-run newspaper said Bush was out to stop them certifying that the country is free of banned weapons.

"The whole world knows that the declarations of the US president toward Iraq are false and even Bush himself knows it," said Babel, run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday.

"If the US administration cannot present proof, it should shut up and let the inspectors carry on their mission in all transparency and without pressure or blackmail."

In another positive development for Baghdad, a UN panel monitoring sanctions against al-Qaeda said Tuesday it had no evidence to back US and British charges of links between Iraq and Osama bin Laden's terror network.

However, Bush and other US leaders have made it clear the United States is prepared to circumvent the UN and take military action "with like-minded nations". Britain is also pouring troops and ships into the Gulf region.

Adding muscle to US rhetoric, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld signed deployment orders for the two additional carrier battle groups at the weekend.

The US Navy will now soon have five aircraft carriers in or bound for the Gulf, giving US commanders the clout to launch a massive air offensive against Iraq, analysts said.

The United States is expected to

have more than 150,000 troops in the region by mid-February.

Australia announced that a first military contingent would leave for the Gulf on Thursday, despite strong political and public opposition to involvement in a US-led war in Iraq.

Ahead of the meeting of Iraq's neighbours it is to host Thursday, Turkey said Baghdad must work harder to convince the arms inspectors and neighbouring states that it no longer possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Turkish Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis's comments appeared in a newspaper interview before the meeting with his counterparts from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria to seek a peaceful resolution of the Iraq crisis.

"We could tell the Iraqi administration to adopt an attitude that could be described as 'pro-active' regarding arms inspectors," Yakis told the English-language Turkish Daily News.

The ministers were to debate a document calling for "diplomatic actions (to be given) the chance to spare the region a human catastrophe", according to a high-ranking Arab official in Istanbul.

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi, meanwhile, said Iraq's neighbours "must prevent the start of a war and the intervention of outside powers in Iraq's internal affairs," the state news agency IRNA reported.

Hunt for killers of US civilian in Kuwait

REUTERS, Kuwait

Kuwaiti police and US military investigators were hunting yesterday for the culprits behind an ambush that killed an American working at a US base in Kuwait where Washington is preparing for a possible war on Iraq.

Michael Rene Pouliot, 46, a civilian contractor working for the US military, was killed on Tuesday when his vehicle was peppered with automatic rifle on a road near Camp Doha, the main US army base in Kuwait.

Another US contractor was wounded and was being treated in hospital in Kuwait City.

The United States embassy condemned the shooting as a terrorist attack. It was the third time since October that Americans have been killed or injured in attacks in Kuwait.

Drugs worth Tk 7 cr destroyed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) destroyed various drugs worth about Tk seven crore at Distillery Road, Gandaria in the city yesterday.

The drugs included 52,849 bottles of Phensidyl, 6.79 kg of heroin, 270 kg of marijuana, 52 marijuana plants, 28,905 marijuana sticks, 948 bottles of foreign liquor, 11,135 cans of beer, 790 bottles of rectified spirit, 1127 bottles of locally made liquor, 5717 ampoules of pethidine and 2639 ampoules of other addictive drugs.

The DNC also arranged a discussion as part of the anti-drug campaign. Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury attended it as chief guest while social welfare minister Ali Anshar Mojaheed as special guest. Mohammad Salam, director general of the DNC presided over the meeting.

BIDS researcher

FROM PAGE 12

be made issues," Dr Zohir added. Because capitalising on such sentiments, a section of the people tries to take advantage by hiding the invisible costs. But the economists and the civil society should recommend not to export gas below a certain price, he said.

Rent seeking can be reduced if the civil society focuses on price as the prime basis for any decisions on sale and purchase of resources, he said.

He said a decision to export gas may be consistent with the current known reserves, and export may not be automatically justified with additional discovery.

Contribution of fertilizer to crop sector performance is extremely high. Thus, the overall contribution of gas remains grossly underestimated, he added.

"An interesting exercise would be to compare between two alternatives — export gas and then import fertilizer or electricity on one hand and on the other, locally produce these two intermediate inputs without exporting gas. Interestingly, such exercises cannot be done without taking into consideration the price factor."

In order to fix the export price more precisely, one needs to take into account the costs involved in installation of pipelines and equipment, Dr Zohir said.

Australian bushfires threaten more towns

REUTERS, Melbourne

High winds and tinderbox conditions pushed Australia's bushfires towards more than a dozen rural towns yesterday, as firefighters and residents prepared for another black weekend.

While the fire danger in the smoke-filled capital, Canberra, has eased, towns in the northeast of Victoria state came under threat from new blazes that swept through more than 20,000 hectares of bushland overnight.

Four homes and a business were lost and firefighters were battling to contain the blazes as the high winds sparked spot fires up to seven km ahead of the main fire front, around 270km northeast of Melbourne, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) said.

"The wind is fairly treacherous. We're dealing with the situation of a very long drought in Victoria so even on a milder day it is still extremely dangerous," CFA spokesman Peter Philips told Reuters.

"We're moving into a fairly extreme weekend of high temperatures, low humidity and high winds, plus there is still a lot of material to burn on the ground, so all the ingredients are there for a very bad weekend."

Canberra was devastated on Saturday after bushfires roared into the capital, killing four people and destroying 451 homes.

Fires near Melbourne

Several small towns in Victoria's alpine region are on high alert as

Graft case

Charges pressed against engr Mosharraf, 6 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday pressed charges against former housing and public works minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain and six others in a graft case.

BAC officer Towhidul Islam submitted the chargesheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

The six others are former Public Works Secretary Jagannath Dey, former Chief Engineer of Public Works Department AKM Mukitir Rahman, Project Director AKM Shahiduzzaman, Additional Chief Engineer Badre Idris, Executive Engineer Akhter Kamal and Additional Engineer Mokarramal Bari.

The Investigation Officer (IO) of the case got approval for submission of the chargesheet from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO's) on January 6.

In the case filed with Ramna thana on February 3, last year, it was alleged that the accused were involved in tender manipulation to favour a certain bidder for setting up the independence monument at Suhrawardy Udyan in the city. Instead of awarding the contract to the lowest bidder, the accused awarded it to Concord Group at a higher rate. As a result, the government incurred a loss of over Tk 2.87 crore.

Following the case, the accused were granted bail by the High Court till submission of the police report.

HR Commission

FROM PAGE 1

In case of allegation against any member of the Commission, the Supreme Court will conduct investigation and the findings will be placed before the president for action.

LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Telecommunication Minister Barrister Aminul Haq, Land Minister Shamsul Islam and Science and ICT Minister Dr Moyeen Khan attended the meeting.

Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladeshis in Kolkata told BBC that the state administration did not inform them about any arrest of Bangladeshis. "There were no illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India," he added.

Fuel fillers

FROM PAGE 1

dealers would be compelled to supply gasoline to customers. "If they don't, the police and the BDR would take action against them."

Meanwhile, our Rajshahi correspondent reports that people in Rajshahi and its adjacent areas were still facing an artificial fuel crisis, especially kerosene.

Kerosene is now selling between Tk 22 and Tk 25 per litre in Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon.

At many rural areas, the price is learnt to have risen up to Tk 28 per litre. Many kerosene traders of Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj returned yesterday evening after failing to collect kerosene from two depots in Hariar and Natore.

bushfires — which have so far razed more than 100,000 hectares (250,000 acres) of national park land and threatened the ski resorts of Falls Creek and Mount Hotham — crept closer.

Victoria state capital Melbourne, currently hosting the Australian Tennis Open, has also been hit by fires.

"As of tomorrow we would say that the whole of Victoria needs to be on high alert because we have even had fires around the metropolitan areas of Melbourne," Philips said.

Firefighters on the island state of Tasmania were also battling to control blazes which have destroyed five homes.

Communities in the alpine region of New South Wales remained on high alert as bushfires continued to ravage the Kosciuszko National Park in the south of the state.

2 cops jailed in mugging case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Two police constables were awarded five years rigorous imprisonment in a mugging case by the Speedy Trial Court, Narayanganj, yesterday.

According to the prosecution, police constables Abdul Kuddus and Shajahan Khan caught Tusheruddin and his friend Mohsin from Galachipia area in the town on November 10, took them to police barrack and snatched a gold chain and two hundred taka from them.

Later, the constables released Tusher and demanded Tk 5 thousand ransom for release of Mohsin.

Tusher's uncle informed Narayanganj police station of the incident. Later police recovered the gold chain and arrested the constables.

Talukder Khaleque sued in another corruption case

UNB, Bagerhat

The Bureau of Anti-corruption yesterday filed another corruption case against Talukder Abdul Khaleque, MP.

Admitting the case the magistrate accepted the prosecution plea for shown arrest of Khaleque and sent the order to Rajshahi prison where he was lodged following arrest by the army-led joint forces on November 1 last year.

Khaleque secured bail on January 18 in the first corruption case from the judge's court on a security bond of Tk25,000.

Two corruption cases were filed against Khaleque, former state minister for relief, accusing him of giving construction work of four government buildings in the name of his own firm by abusing power and misappropriating public money.

Four other accused in the case are chief engineer Zahedur Rahman, engineer Mannan, accounts officer Bazrul Rahman and assistant engineer abduallah al Mamoon.

Two criminals held with arms in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested two criminals from Hamzambagh area under Panchlaish police station yesterday.

Acting on a tip off, police raided the area and nabbed Didarul Alam alias Mizan, 27, and Babul Acharyia, 29 at noon.

They (police) also recovered two guns and bullets from their possession.

A case has been filed with Panchlaish police station in this connection.

Campaigners

FROM PAGE 12

A group of election campaigners chased some supporters of the AL candidate into the house of Ali. They beat up the supporters and the family members and vandalised the house.

They snatched the girl from her mother and threw her onto the oven. Rokhsana was rushed to the Madaripur Sadar Hospital and shifted to the DMCH later.

Police received a case after a lot of insistence by the complainant against the attackers but not without dropping the name of Golam Kibria, brother of the BNP candidate Shajahan Kazi. Kibria allegedly led the attack.

Later, a gang of four went to the DMCH and asked Rokhsana's father Julhas Dhal to leave the capital with his daughter soon.

"You and your family have to die if you don't do that," threatened one of them.

The condition of the girl is very critical, Dr SL Sen, chief of the burn and plastic surgery department of the DMCH, told The Daily Star last night.

Doctored buildings

FROM PAGE 1

of the 'last chairman' or the 'last authorised officer' or that the signatures have been forged.

Hundreds of such files are now missing from Rajuk's archive, making hundreds of buildings with gross irregularities permanent feature for the city.

On the Satmasjid Road at the busy Shankar intersection, a six-storey shopping mall has recently been constructed. The walkway in front of it has been converted into a parking place. Its underground parking has the entrance on the narrow and busy Shankar Road. Moreover, the parking is used as a warehouse for the mall.

All along the Satmasjid Road, Sheikh Kamal Swarani, Mirpur Road, Mohammapur, Elephant Road, Mouchak, Sadarghat, Malibagh and Maghbazar, similar shopping malls with gross deviation

tions are rapidly coming up.

The 'authorised officers' approved hundreds of building plans, violating height restrictions and other clauses of the Building Construction Rules, Rajuk sources said. Recently, when the authorities found out that hundreds of files are missing from all the four authorised officers, they started confiscating the approved plans from the building owners. The signatures on the plans retained by the owners matched those of the authorised officers, according to a source.

The chairman of Rajuk called the authorised officers to his office and asked them to countersign the documents. When their signatures matched those in the plans, the authorised officers flatly denied having anything to do with those approvals.

"Money had played the vital role here," said a Rajuk official on condition of anonymity. "When the building owners' plans were rejected by the Building Construction Committee on one reasons or another, the authorised officers and other officials concerned illegally approved the plans and hid or destroyed all relevant files."

"This proves that an organised gang is working inside Rajuk to help building owners flout the rules. This has spoiled the urban environment," the official said.

False case Court accepts petition for legal action against complainant

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A special tribunal in the city on Tuesday relieved eight accused as charges against them were proved false and accepted a petition for legal action against the complainant.

Mohammad Shahjahan had filed a case with Uttara thana in the city on December 4, 2001 against eight persons alleging that they abducted his wife Asma Akhter alias Moni and their child from his Uttara residence on June 14 and took them to Comilla.

He also accused the eight of confining his wife in a house there and forcibly engaging her in sex work.

The accused in the case were Abul Hashem, Chandra Lekha, Bipad Bhanjan alias Haripada, Polish Chandra Sarkar, Momin, Azim, Islam and Rafiqul. The case against them was filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000.

But investigation revealed that the mother and the child were not abducted. Moni along with her child had left her husband's house alone following a family feud and had stayed at her parents' house at Comilla.

Moreover, the complainant could not produce any witness in support of his allegations during the investigation. So, the investigation officer (IO) found the charges "false, fabricated and concocted" and submitted a "final report" to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court, Dhaka on September 21 last year, praying for discharge of the accused from the charges.

Later, the case was transferred to the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka for disposal.

After scrutinising the case diary (CD) and other documents, Judge Kazi Rahmat Ullah of the special tribunal yesterday accepted the "final report" and took the petition of the prosecution against the complainant into cognisance. The case was filed against the eight persons only to harass them, the judge said in his order.

The court also issued summons upon Shahjahan to appear before it on March 8.

Special Public Prosecutor Arfan Uddin Khan filed the petition on behalf of the prosecution.

2 killed

FROM PAGE 12

when the victim's relatives were trying to bury it secretly. Police could not trace the body of Jamal till writing of this report yesterday evening.

Firoz's body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed.

Cable operators

FROM PAGE 12

lation. However, COAB President Anwar Parvez said the association would go by the government regulation and cancel the membership of violators.

The COAB is writing to all deputy commissioners (DCs) to take legal action against the 'defiant' operators.

At the same time, he feared that the decision to stop any operation of video channels would affect their business.

The COAB will urge the government soon to formulate a separate regulation permitting the cable operators to run VCD channels.

Sources said the decision has angered viewers, especially in the posh residential areas where newly released Hindi and English movies are screened.

Women's football