

France, Germany join forces against war

China, Russia oppose immediate conflict in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad
France and Germany yesterday said "everything must be done" to prevent war in Iraq, as Baghdad accused the United States of trying to sabotage the United Nations disarmament process as a pretext for a conflict.

with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder that the two countries were united in their opposition to war in Iraq. "Germany and France have the same judgement on the Iraq crisis," Chirac said at a news conference with Schroeder by his side, summing up their stand in two points. "The first is that any decision for the (UN) Security Council belongs to it alone, to be expressed after hearing the report of the inspectors" searching for alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Chirac said. The second is that, "for us, war is always evidence of failure."

Everything must be done to avoid war." The stance followed an attack by US President George W Bush Tuesday ahead of expected demands by inspection chiefs for more time to complete their work and amid serious reservations among key countries of the need for war. "Don't expect Germany to approve a resolution which would give legitimacy to war," Schroeder said, without making it clear if Berlin as a non-permanent member of the Security Council would vote against or abstain. And in another blow to Washington's attempts to forge a coalition in support of military action, Russia aligned itself with Germany had already said

Tuesday it refused to add its voice to any UN vote for the use of force against Iraq, while France, Russia and China backed more time for the disarmament inspectors to fulfil their mandate. "The ministry also warned that the violators of the regulation would face legal action. The decision has elicited protests from the operators who said a small number of operators engaged in screening porn movies and it should not be blamed on all. The operators demanded withdrawal of the decision and promised to pay taxes on the commercials, if the government formulates a regu

Cable operators asked to close video channels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The government once again directed cable television operators not to run their own video channels. The order came in line with the Cable Television Network Regulation, 2001 to put a lid on commercials and porn movies. In a letter, the Ministry of Information has recently asked the Cable Operators Association of Bangladesh (COAB) to send the message to its members across the country. The ministry also warned that the violators of the regulation would face legal action. The decision has elicited protests from the operators who said a small number of operators engaged in screening porn movies and it should not be blamed on all. The operators demanded withdrawal of the decision and promised to pay taxes on the commercials, if the government formulates a regu



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia sets a pigeon free to inaugurate the fifth national council and 20th founding anniversary of the Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal at the Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

Campaigners toss girl into oven

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Union Parishad (UP) election campaigners tossed a three-and-a-half-year-old girl into a burning earthen oven. With over 50 per cent burns, Roksana is now fighting for life at hospital. The BNP-backed UP election campaigners threw her onto fire only because her grandfather Ali Ashraf Sikder supported the UP chairman candidate of the Awami League (AL). The incident took place at Babnata under Khoazpur Union in Madaripur on January 16. The attackers have also threatened her parents with death unless they take her away from the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) she was admitted to.



Mother of Roksana from Madaripur attends to her daughter at the DMCH, who sustained over 50 per cent burns. Union Parishad election campaigners threw the girl onto fire over a row with their rivals.

2 killed while making bombs in Bhola

A CORRESPONDENT, Barisal
Two persons were killed in a bomb blast at village Kungapatti under Bhelu Mia union of Bhola district yesterday. The victims were identified as Firoz, 28, and Jamal, 23. According to police and local people, the incident occurred when one of the bombs they were making to supply to rival groups involved in the upcoming UP elections accidentally went off, killing the two on the spot. On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered Firoz's body

Criminal at helm of Natore municipality

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi
Another BNP leader facing criminal charges has been appointed administrator of a newly declared municipality in Natore. Md Ekramul Alam, president of Boraigram upazila BNP, was made administrator of Bonpara Pourashava on December 31, according to a government circular. Alam is accused in at least seven criminal cases including those for murder, looting and torching houses. He is accused in Awami League leader Dr Aynal Haque murder case, and cases in connection with torching 47 houses of AL supporters on March 28 and March 29 last year. Despite the cases, he used to move freely in Boraigram and attend political gatherings before launch of the army-led joint drive. He went into hiding when the anti-crime drive was launched. Alam came out of his hideout on January 15 and attended a reception by the upazila BNP in the evening. District and local leaders and workers of BNP were present at the reception.

Forex smuggling Proceedings of case against Bahauddin Nasim stayed

UNB, Dhaka
The High Court yesterday stayed for six months the proceedings of the foreign currency smuggling case against Bahauddin Nasim pending with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court. The court also issued rule upon the government to show cause as to why the case against Bahauddin should not be quashed. The order came upon a petition filed by Bahauddin, joint convener of Awami Schchasebak League, who faces a number of criminal cases including sedition charge. Barrister Amirul Islam appeared for Bahauddin, who was recently released on bail after 10 months in prison.

Terror-risk list Khaleda blames it on AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday blamed the recent US decision to include Bangladesh in the terror-risk list on "irresponsible activities and statements of a particular party". "The party and its leaders have launched an anti-Bangladesh propaganda since it lost the last general elections," she said at the fifth national council and 20th founding anniversary of the Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal at the Paltan Maidan in the city. The propaganda apparently influenced Washington to impose immigration restrictions on Bangladeshis, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson said. Khaleda also brushed aside Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's claim that the four-party alliance government was to blame for the US decision. "My govern-

ment is not responsible at all. It was she and her party who had influenced the decision with anti-Bangladesh statements at home and abroad." She said the party portrayed Bangladesh as a communal state when in power to then US President Bill Clinton during his visit in March 2000. The party's propaganda had influenced Clinton's decision to cancel all scheduled programmes including a visit to the Savar National Mausoleum, Khaleda said. The US president spent the whole day in hotel, only attending a Bangabhaban programme, she added. Without naming the AL chief and senior Indian ministers, Khaleda said, "They used similar words in their statements against Bangladesh. They said the same things at the same time." "It is unfortunate that senior leaders of that country made such

false and imaginary allegations against Bangladesh. This is nothing but a deep-rooted conspiracy against Bangladesh." The party's campaign and the subsequent US restrictions has thrown hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi students and workers overseas into uncertainty and panic, the prime minister told the Samik Dal leaders and activists. "Can the leader be called patriotic? They (AL) have put our independence, sovereignty and economy in jeopardy and are still trying to isolate the country from the world only to avenge their defeat in the elections." However, she said, such campaigns would not be successful, as Bangladesh "has a reputation of being a moderate and democratic country in the world". Khaleda said she firmly believed that the US "knows Bangladesh as a moderate country" and would drop

Price should dictate gas export option: BIDS researcher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A decision to export gas without considering price would go against the country's interest, a researcher said yesterday. "There are so many people who took bribes (in the past) and signed deals without protecting the interest of the people," said Dr Sajjad Zohir, senior research fellow of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), at a city seminar. He termed the recommendations by the national committee on gas utilisation 'vague' and feared that the parliament might decide to export gas on the basis of such 'vague' suggestions. The national committee had suggested that gas export might be considered in case of demand saturation and additional discovery. But it did not consider the price factor. "It is very important to identify the price at which gas can be exported," he said. "Those who signed the deal with KAFCO to supply gas at only 75 cents definitely took bribes for such an agreement," he mentioned. "Who gave the right to sign the deal?" Dr Zohir was presenting a paper on 'Economics of Gas Export: The Story of Invisible Price' at the BIDS conference room yesterday. "Transit or export gas should not

Meter 'monopoly' for autorickshaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has allegedly delayed issuance of permission to fare meter importers except one, thus allowing a single company to monopolise business. Official sources said, initially four companies had been chosen to import the meters. On December 21, the BRTA permitted Distribution One (DO) to import and sell meters. But for 25 days no other company got BRTA clearance for the same venture, official sources said. Of the four importers Innovative Marketing and Distribution Limited and SK Traders finally got their permits on January 15 and Holy Trade on January 21, official sources said. Representatives of the other three importers expressed their frustration over the delay.

They alleged that DO already had a head-start over them and that the BRTA had wasted time scrutinising their documents. Chairman of the BRTA Jalal Uddin could not be reached yesterday for comments. Meanwhile, the DO and Innovative Marketing and Distribution Limited have already started importing meters from Taiwan and India respectively. The digital meters will be calibrated according to the rate fixed by the BRTA. These will also fulfil other BRTA criteria of measuring distance, waiting time and trip number. DO officials said they are installing meters on 100 auto-rickshaws everyday on average at the Gulshan workshop. They had received about 2,500 bookings till yesterday.

Innovative Marketing Limited has received orders for only 300 meters, said an official. SK Traders will start importing meters from India within a day or two, said Masum Saad of the company. Although the DO said the company has offered one-year warranty for the meters, the drivers alleged that DO would provide free servicing for only three months after installation. However when asked, the DO official denied the allegation. Meanwhile, the auto-rickshaw drivers and owners alleged the importers are charging excess rates for meters. The DO is charging Tk7,500 for each meter imported from Taiwan while Innovative Marketing Limited is charging Tk 7,000 for an Indian meter. A guideline of the traffic depart

Seven held for Joypurhat shrine killing

ANWAR ALI, Joypurhat
Police yesterday arrested seven people in connection with the killing of five at a shrine in Begungram, Joypurhat. The Detective Branch (DB) of Police has been given the charge of investigation. Armed assailants killed five people at the Anjumand-e-Christia shrine in Begungram under Kalai Upazila in the district Monday night. The assailants also looted Tk 50,000, 14 electric fans and other valuables from the shrine. A police camp has been set up on the shrine premises to ensure security to the villagers.

The arrestees are Siraj Uddin (caretaker of the shrine), Jalal Uddin, Khalilur Rahman, Mamtaj Ali, Abdul Hamid, Abdul Jalil and Bachchu. Although Investigation Officer Abdur Rahim could not confirm the motive behind the incident, he believes it is more than robbery. "We don't know the reason for sure right now, as our investigation is going on." Superintendent of Police Habibur Rahman said, "We took the incident seriously, as it took place in a religious place." But a senior police official said, "The incident may be the result of a dispute over religious practice

between the shrine men and a fundamentalist group in the village." In the past, the two groups debated the issues of religious practices like prostrating before the portrait of the priest, sources said. The history of the shrine dates back to the early 19th century when the priest Khwaja Shah Abdul Gafur Chistia came to the area from Kashimpur village in Muradnagar, Comilla, and preached Islam for long. His Begungram house was converted into a shrine after his death in 1975. About three kilometres from Kalai Upazila, the shrine complex was built on about three acres.

Hasina blames PM for deaths in anticrime drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for the custodial deaths during army-led anti-crime drive across the country. While exchanging views with a socio-cultural organisation, Shadana Sangsad, at Awami League's (AL) Dhanmondi office in the city, Hasina said, Khaleda had ordered the army out for the 'Operation Clean Heart' and that now she could not get away with the liabilities of custodial deaths. On the recent development of Bangladesh's inclusion into the US-prepared list of 'terror-risk' countries, the AL president said, because of human rights violations and opposition repression,

the country's image has been tarnished before the international community. Terming the latest US step as disgraceful for the people of Bangladesh, Hasina expressed her belief that by allowing the ruling alliance to remain in power, people would never be able to change their lot and get back lost glory. AL leaders Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Obaidul Kader, Abdul Latif Siddiqui and BM Mozammel Haq were present when the Shadana Sangsad delegation led by Dr Hossain Mansur and Delwar Hossain Bhuiyan met the opposition leader.

UP elections: Army to be deployed in Rangamati

UNB, Rangamati
Army will be deployed during the union parishad elections in the district for maintaining law and order. The decision was taken at a meeting of the district law and order committee on Tuesday in view of the situation prevailing in the hill region. ADC (General) Karim Gazi informed the meeting that army personnel would take position near the polling centres a day before the staggered elections beginning January 25. A team of 20 members of law-enforcing agencies will be deployed in each centre for ensuring peaceful, free and fair polling. "The army will stay in tent in areas where there are no camps. Meanwhile, the administration has identified all the 365 polling centers in the district as vulnerable.

Palestinian talks back on track

REUTERS, Ramallah
Egyptian-hosted Palestinian talks on halting attacks against Israelis were back on track on Tuesday after two militant groups backtracked on plans to boycott the Cairo parley. " Hamas and Islamic Jihad have informed the Egyptians tonight they have changed their position and will send their representatives to Cairo for the talks," said the official, speaking to Reuters from Cairo. Other Palestinian officials said the talks planned for Wednesday would be held today instead. Hamas and Islamic Jihad, dedicated to the destruction of the Jewish state, have carried out

dozens of suicide bombings since a Palestinian uprising for statehood began in September 2000. Moussa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas official told the Saudi television station MBC: "There has been a good development in that invitations have been sent to previously excluded factions." Asked if this would encourage Hamas to attend the talks, he said: "No doubt we will answer this call positively." He told Reuters the meeting might be held later than Thursday. "There isn't enough time to prepare for a meeting on Thursday. I assume Saturday would be a suitable date," he said.

US spy drone crashes in Pakistan

REUTERS, Karachi
An unmanned US Air Force spy plane crashed during a test flight in southern Pakistan, a senior Pakistani police official said on Tuesday. The drone crashed on Monday evening moments after it took off for the air base in Jacobabad, Rana Fathe Shar Joya, a senior superintendent of police in the city, told Reuters. "It crashed because of technical problems and not because of any hostile fire," he said. "There was no casualty on the ground." The heavily guarded Jacobabad air base is on the outskirts of the city, in the southern province of Sindh.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 23		5-37 pm
Jan 24	6-42 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-43	5-48
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation