

China joins French-German outcry over war against Iraq

AFP, Beijing

China has jumped on growing French and German opposition to war in Iraq to reinforce its own position against Washington's aggressive posturing on the issue, analysts say.

Unusually blunt comments by the foreign ministry Thursday that China was uneasy about the military build-up in the Gulf were seen as the clearest message yet that Beijing does not like the way Washington is racing towards a conflict.

Wu Guoguang, an expert in Sino-US relations at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, said China does not want to be seen as leading opposition to US actions but was

more than happy to jump on the coat-tails of Paris and Berlin.

"China has learnt through experience that it doesn't pay to lead opposition to US actions but now that Germany and France have explicitly expressed their feelings it is very happy to follow," he said.

"China has always said the United Nations is a legitimate body to settle international issues and it is determined that the United States must get an endorsement from the UN before any action."

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council China, like Russia and France, has the power to veto resolutions and its tough-

ened stance on Iraq throws yet more diplomatic obstacles in front of Washington as it struggles to maintain international unity.

"We express worry and unease about the current large-scale military concentration in the region," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue, who has also made clear it was "too early" to draw any conclusions about the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The United Nations weapons inspectors will give their first formal compliance report to the Security Council on Monday.

It is considered key to deciding future action.

Given that Beijing over the past year or so has consistently offered support in the US fight against terrorism as traditionally fraught bilateral ties improved, the hardening of its position on Iraq is seen as a subtle shift in policy that could be related to North Korea.

"This could be seen as another approach to the North Korean problem," said Brian Bridges, a professor of politics at Hong Kong's Lingnan University.

China wants the nuclear standoff between Washington and Pyongyang to be solved through dialogue and has voiced opposition to taking the matter to the Security Council which could lead to sanctions.

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5th congress of Jubo League opens today

REAZ AHMAD

Backstage parleys are on for selection of a new leadership of Awami League's youth front Awami Jubo League, as its fifth congress opens today.

AL President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina opens the Jubo League congress this morning at Paltan Maidan in the city.

The most discussed names for the post of Jubo League chairman are its Presidium member and Opposition Chief Whip in Parliament Abdus Shahid and Joint Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak.

Though there are a few aspirants for the post of general secretary, it is almost certain that Organising Secretary Mirza Azam MP would be

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PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of visitors mill around at the Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday. The fair takes on a cheerful look on sunny weekends.

Businessman killed in city road accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young businessman died in a road accident at Gulshan in the city yesterday morning.

The businessman, Aminul Haque Aimon, 26, was driving his private car towards Gulshan circle-1 from Gulshan circle-2. At one stage, the car hit a truck coming from the opposite direction in front of a house at Gulshan circle-2 area, police said.

The car, Dhaka Metro Ga-13-8240, slammed into the truck at about 5:35am, leaving the businessman dead.

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30 fishermen abducted from Sundarbans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Thirty Bangladeshi fishermen were kidnapped on Thursday morning from Malancha river in the Sundarbans allegedly by Indian pirates.

The fishermen are now held hostage at Pashurtala near the Indian border for a ransom of Tk six lakh, police said.

Sunday has been set as the

deadline for payment of the ransom, failing which the fishermen will face "a dire consequence", said Gazi Nazrul Islam MP, elected from Shyamnagar upazilla in Satkhira district.

Some fishermen who managed to escape by tricks alleged that police have refused to go there to rescue the hostages.

Gazi Nazrul Islam MP also said

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Ex-whip Suja freed from Rangpur jail

UNB, Rangpur

Awami League leader and former whip Mostafa Rashidi Suja was released from the district jail here yesterday.

Wife and daughters of Suja, Mostafizur Rahman Fizar MP, Khulna AL leaders Mohiuddin Ahmed and Dr Sheikh Baharul Alam, former MP Sarfuddin Ahmed Jhantu, and local AL leaders received him at the jail gate at 6:30pm.

Accompanied by his family members, Suja, who was arrested by the joint forces from his Khulna residence during the countrywide anticorruption drive, left Rangpur for Dhaka immediately after his release.

Hasina blames govt for country's 'tainted' image

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh and its people are now facing the "hateful and humiliating consequences of the misdeeds of BNP-Jammat alliance government that projected the country as a terrorist one."

She said lives of countrymen both at home and abroad have been put at great risk due to "political vengeance, lack of political foresight, wrong foreign policy and perverted attitude of the alliance government."

"Falsehood and bluff by this government created the crisis of Bangladesh being listed by the United States as a terror-risk country," the opposition leader said while addressing a function at the Dhanmondi Abahani playground.

"Employment of thousands of expatriates is now in danger while exports and other businesses of the

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Sylhet prepares for its first city corp'n polls

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The run-up to the first Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) election has become animated with the announcement of mayoral candidature by the BNP-led four-party alliance and the Awami League (AL).

The BNP chairperson, Khaleda Zia, finalised the candidature of MA Haque, Sylhet district BNP president, from the four-party alliance at a meeting in the capital Thursday.

On January 17, the BNP frontline leader M Saifur Rahman announced the mayoral candidature of Haque at a press conference attended by the alliance partners at the Sylhet Circuit House.

And on January 14, the AL frontline leader Abdus Samad Azad and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil at a public meeting announced the name of Badar Uddin Kamran for mayor in the SCC polls, scheduled for March 20.



MA Haque, Badar Uddin Kamran, AFM Kamal

Kamran was elected Sylhet Pourashava chairman in 1995 and elevated to mayor through a gazette notification on July 26, 2002 after the upgrading of the pourashava to city corporation.

Also, Kamran was re-designated as the city AL president along the party lines, which gave him a better chance to strengthen his position and helped him get the party ticket.

To make things difficult for the

alliance, the BNP leader AFM Kamal who was elected chairman twice of the Sylhet Pourashava, announced his mayoral candidature as an independent. The president of the Zia Parishad (Sylhet unit) seems to earn a lot of supports.

Two more candidates MA Gaffar and Shamsuzzaman from the ruling fold earlier decided to take part in the race.

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Temperature marks rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Temperature rose to 4.5 degrees Celsius yesterday from 3.4.

Iswardi in Pabna was the coldest place at 4.5.

Temperature in the capital was measured at 10.0 up from 8.1.

The cold wave is likely to continue over Sitakunda, Srimangal, Comilla, Jessore and Kushtia, said a weathercast by the Met office yesterday.

Thick fog may settle on river basins and northern parts of the country.

3m Pakistanis under FBI scanner

PTI, Islamabad

The US intelligence agency FBI, which has been tracking al-Qaeda and Taliban militants in Pakistan, would be collecting complete information about three million Pakistanis including criminals, politicians, industrialists and businessmen, officials were on Friday quoted as saying.

The US authorities want to collect all information about "every Tom, Dick and Harry" who is supposed to be able to pose threat to US interests, local daily Dawn quoted officials of the Pakistani interior ministry as saying.

In view of the possibility of a popular backlash, the Federal Bureau of Investigation will use domestic investigation agencies to collect the data, the daily said.

For the purpose, the US bureau is currently conducting a week-long course in Islamabad to train local officials.

At least 15 police inspectors were selected from each of the four provinces for the training course to be started from this month.

The policemen are being educated on how to collect evidence from a crime scene, fingerprint an object and take fingerprints of the suspects and examine them through specialised software, the daily said.

DOWN TO EARTH

Running out of open space

ASM NURUNNABI

Once a matter of pride for everyone, the beautiful open spaces in Dhaka City are now shrinking frighteningly. For example, the city's Ramna area would be flooded with a riot of colours in summertime when the numerous Krishnachura trees there were in full bloom, so much so that the view from a distance would give the impression of the entire area being on fire. In winter also, the verdant area used to acquire a singular appeal as a mild nip in

the air merged with bright sunshine.

But with the current craze of urban development sweeping the capital, such open spaces or rather whatever is left of them now evoke nostalgic memories in old timers. The fewer open spaces in the old city also seemed to meet the needs of the past given the low density of city population at that time. Now the old city's open areas are all but extinct and the handful few that are still holding on to their meagre existence have become the

haunts of anti-social elements.

In the context of our social structure, outdoor recreational needs of most of us city-dwellers are simple. We usually only long for a breath of fresh air in an open space where our children can play and have some fun. Now in the frenzy of rapid growth in the urban areas, these simple and basic amenities are being eliminated.

In the burgeoning city life, the modern concepts of open civic space have assumed supreme

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3 killed in N'ganj road mishap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Three people were killed in a road accident at Dharmaganj under Fatullah police station yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place when a sand-laden truck fell into a roadside ditch, killing its driver Wahab Kazi, 30, helpers Iqbal Kazi, 25, and Mamun, 22, on the spot.

All the victims hailed from Dharmaganj.

Fire Brigade personnel with the help of local people recovered the bodies and sent them to Narayanganj General Hospital for autopsy.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 25		5-40 pm
Jan 26	6-42 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-52
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation