

# France, Belgium veto US request for NATO help

## Iraq plays oil card to stave off attack

AFP, Paris

France yesterday led European resistance to US war plans for Iraq, plunging NATO into an unprecedented crisis and initiating debate at the UN Security Council on an alternative to early military action.

The moves, backed by France's allies Belgium and Germany, have incurred the fury of the United States, which called them "inexcusable" and a threat to the future of both international bodies.

They followed the departure from Baghdad yesterday of UN inspection chiefs Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei after weekend talks in which they said they saw "good progress" from Iraq in cooperating with a UN resolution on disarmament passed unanimously last November.

Iraq sought to further stave off the threat of a US-led war by asking the inspectors to underline its "positive cooperation" to Security Council members, and reportedly promising to let US and British companies into its oil market if conflict was avoided.

France and Belgium, backed by Germany, used their NATO veto to block a US request for the alliance to begin military planning and deployment for an imminent war and invasion to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The three countries maintain that such preparations would send "the wrong signal" as long as diplomatic options had not been exhausted.

The 19-member organisation immediately went into emergency sessions after Turkey tried to break the deadlock by invoking an article in NATO's founding treaty that calls on the allies to convene whenever a member state feels its territory is threatened.

US ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns said it was a "most unfortunate" decision. "Because of this action NATO is now facing a crisis of credibility," he told reporters.

The United States views Turkey - NATO's only member to border Iraq -- as a key part of its invasion plans and has relentlessly pressured Ankara for permission to deploy tens of thousands of US troops in the southwest of the country.

"This is undoubtedly a difficult situation," NATO Secretary General George Robertson told reporters, adding: "I'm confident we'll reach agreement but I can't say when it will happen."

At the same time, the UN Security Council was debating a proposal put forward by French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin last week for the number of UN inspectors in Iraq to be tripled to around 300, according to a spokesman for the German government, which holds the council's chair this month.

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A launch (left) packed beyond capacity sails through the Buriganga putting its passengers at risk and a cattle-laden trawler heads for Dhaka yesterday ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.



# Shishu hospital yet to catch test cheats

## Mayor skips office to dodge bill claimants

STAR REPORT

The Dhaka Shishu Hospital (DSH) has not yet taken action for alleged cheating in admission test at the Bangladesh Institute of Child Health (BICH).

Question papers were reportedly leaked before the admission test for Master's in Medicine (MD) course held in November last.

Sources said a three-member probe body suggested action against those responsible in its report to the chairman of the DSH management board.

About 200 students appeared at the test. Out of 300 marks, nine candidates got between 200 and 250 and some others even got close to 300. But in last 15 years, the highest marks obtained in the test were around 180.

After the results were published, a number of teachers challenged those, saying it is not possible to score such high marks.

The BICH academic council at an emergency meeting on November 27, 2002 unanimously recommended cancellation of the test results.

Some of the sources said the probe report might have suggested holding of the admission test again but express skepticism about it because of "strong political influence".

Dewan Salauddin MP, Chairman of the Management Board, said "I have the report in my hand and may soon recommend actions, which may include removal of the director of academy of BICH."

Regarding possible cancellation of the test results, he said, "We don't have solid evidence of cheating. Until we have proof we cannot suggest cancellation. But I smell there is something wrong."

He however declined to give details of the report.

A member of the inquiry committee requesting anonymity said, "If the academic council says that

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has not been attending his Nagar Bhaban office for about a week to avoid contractors pressing for their outstanding bills before Eid.

Khoka, however, said he could not attend office "because he had other businesses to attend to". The mayor is also the minister for fisheries and livestock, an MP from Dhaka-7 constituency, and president of the city BNP.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) owes the contractors, suppliers and different organisations Tk 596 crore in outstanding bills. The contractors' share of the money is Tk 70 crore. When Khoka took over as mayor in 2002, the unpaid amount was calculated at Tk 631 crore. Taka 35 crore has been paid back so far.

The DCC yesterday paid a part of contractors' bills from an unspecified fund of the corporation. Several contractors were seen crowding the corridors of

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# Death anniversary of Tawfiq Aziz Khan today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second death anniversary of Tawfiq Aziz Khan, eminent journalist, sports writer, commentator and former executive editor of The Daily Star will be observed today.

He died of lung cancer at the age of 64 on February 11, 2001.

To observe the day a 'Doa mahfil' will be held after Asr prayers at his residence 'Chandramalika' at 278/2 Elephant Road.

All relatives, friends, well-wishers and admirers have been requested to attend it and pray for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

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# Zookeepers sneak out endangered gayals onto cattle market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two gayals from the Dhaka and Rajshahi zoos have been put on sale at the Gabtali cattle market in the city.

The zoo authorities sold the two animals for an unspecified amount of money several months ago. The price tag for one of the gayals yesterday was Tk 1 lakh. There are also reports of people selling spotted deer in the cattle markets.

Traders said they did not expect to find so many locally bred animals for this year's Eid. Unlike previous years, livestock from India can hardly be seen. Traders said with the presence of hundreds of thousands of cattle they thought that the

Throughout yesterday, thousands more poured into the city, by trucks, mechanised boats and on foot to join the already packed cattle markets.

Sale of sacrificial animals will reach its peak today and throughout the night as most city dwellers prefer to wait till the last moment to have a better bargain and also because they have no room to keep the animals in their houses.

Traders said they did not expect to find so many locally bred animals for this year's Eid. Unlike previous years, livestock from India can hardly be seen. Traders said with the presence of hundreds of thousands of cattle they thought that the

prices of sacrificial animals might fall towards the end of the buying spree.

Some of the markets including at Nayabazar, Sonargono intersection, Gabtali, Azimpur, Kamapur, Hazaribagh and Dhanmondi have been crowded with traders and animals. Footpaths, roads and even a children's park have been converted into cattle markets.

The children's park was, however, recovered yesterday from the grasp of the leaseholders. Hundreds of traders evicted from the park have occupied the footpath

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# Move to replace cabinet secy 'deepens' discontent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

'Discontent' in the civil administration has 'deepened' following a move to replace the cabinet secretary for his 'neutrality', highly placed sources said.

The move initiated by a section of 'junior but influential' officials, most of them posted at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), is now being backed by some top bureaucrats. Those officials proposed that a temporary post of 'principal planning secretary' be created for incumbent Cabinet Secretary Dr Saadat Husain and that Health Secretary Fazlur Rahman be made cabinet secretary, the sources said.

Saadat was made Cabinet Secretary on May 6 last year and he is due to go on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) on November 23 this year. Fazlur Rahman is scheduled to go on LPR in less than two weeks (on February 22).

Sources at the PMO and the Secretariat said the move to replace the cabinet secretary just because of his 'neutrality' would set a 'bad example' and lead to 'further rancor' in the civil administration.

The 'influential' junior officials have initiated the move as the Superior Selection Board (SSB) headed by the cabinet secretary has not included them in the list recommended by it for promotion to the posts of deputy secretary.

The SSB recommended promo

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# 9 more held for polls violence in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police yesterday arrested nine more people in connection with Saturday's attack on election officials at Pak Khali village in the Sadar upazila.

They also recovered four of the 13 firearms and a wireless set snatched from police during the attack.

With this, the number of arrested people rose to 41. The recovered firearms are two rifles and two short guns.

Police, with reinforcement, are searching houses to recover rest of the looted firearms.

At about 9:00pm on Saturday, about 200 armed supporters of a defeated Union Parishad chairman candidate attacked the officials when they were leaving Naikkongdia primary school pooling centre after announcing unofficial result of UP polls.

At least 100 people including policemen and election officials were injured.

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Visitors leaf through books at the Ekushey Book Fair at the Bangla Academy yesterday. The fair found less visitors on the eve of the Eid.

# Cattle traders allege police, BDR links in toll collection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Extortionists are collecting toll from cattle trucks under protection of a section of police and BDR personnel, cattle traders alleged.

They are protected by police on highways and by the Bangladesh Rifles in border areas, they claimed.

Azhar Uddin, a photojournalist of the daily Prothom Alo, was beaten on Sunday as he was snapping such illegal toll collection from a Dhaka-bound truck in presence of police at the city-by-pass crossing.

Anwar Hossain, Secretary of Rajshahi Sarak Paribahan Owners' Association also alleged that toll collection by law enforcers was "alarming".

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# Indian pirates kidnap 50 fishermen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Fifty Bangladeshi fishermen were abducted on Sunday allegedly by Indian pirates from Dighimari river in the Sundarbans.

The abductors have kept the fishermen hostage at Pashurtala near the Indian border and demanded a ransom of Tk 10 lakh, police said.

The pirates have also warned that if they do not get the money by Thursday the fishermen will face 'a dire consequence'. They released Golam Hossain of village Atulia in Shyamnagar upazila and the owner of the trawler by which the fishermen went to catch fish.

Police said the fishermen went to the Sundarbans on Saturday night taking permission from the Forest Department. They reached Dighimari river on Sunday morning, Indian pirates attacked them.

The fishermen who were abducted are from Atulia, Kashmiri, Noabeki and Padma Pukur villages of Shyamnagar upazila. Identity of two of the abductees has so far been known. They are Rafikul Islam, 28 and Abdus Samad, 25, sons of Abdur Rahim of Atulia village.

Fourteen fishermen were also kidnapped from Hogladanga Kunchi area in the Sundarbans on Saturday by the Indian Pirates. They are yet to be released.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 11		5-50 pm
Feb 12	6-36 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 11		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-56	6-01
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation