

# EU in crisis talks over Iraq as US, UK stay firm on war path

**AFP, Brussels**  
A sharply divided European Union was seeking common ground on handing the Iraq crisis at emergency talks yesterday, with staunch US ally Britain saying Baghdad must be told it faces a "credible threat of force".  
The EU leaders' debate on whether -- and when -- to give up on diplomacy in the bid to rid Iraq of its alleged weapons of mass destruction follows a massive display of opposition to a US-led war by millions of people across the world at the weekend.  
EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said ahead of the talks in Brussels: "Everybody agrees that war may be necessary at a given moment, but we're not at this point in time. ... This is a moment in which we have to work together to avoid a conflict that can be avoided."  
But British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said: "Time is running out for Iraq. ... Active diplomacy has to be backed by a credible threat of force, and, if necessary and appropriate, that force has to be used."  
French President Jacques Chirac, leading efforts to slow the

drive for war by an increasingly impatient Washington, gave a nod to this view when he told Monday's edition of US weekly Time that Iraq disarms peacefully "it will be due in large part to the presence of American forces on the spot".  
Along with fellow EU powerhouse Germany, France has taken the sharpest anti-war line in the 15-member bloc, squaring up against Britain, Spain and Italy -- whose capitals were swamped with Saturday's largest peace protests.  
Baghdad hailed the global peace demonstrations as a great victory for the regime, with the newspaper Babel, run by Saddam's eldest son Uday, speaking of "the humiliating international isolation of the United States and Great Britain."  
On Sunday, White House national security adviser Condoleezza Rice brushed aside global opposition to war by warning that Washington was losing patience with diplomatic efforts to force Baghdad to disarm.  
"It is time for this to end. Enough is enough," Rice said, adding: "We don't want a Security Council resolution that somehow is a delaying tactic. The Security Council cannot

continue on this path for much longer."  
Washington argues that Iraq has violated UN resolution 1441, which gives Baghdad a last chance to scrap its alleged nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and ballistic missiles. The resolution threatens "serious consequences" -- which Washington interprets to mean war -- if Iraq does not comply.  
ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, warned Sunday that arms inspections in Iraq could not go on forever and that the Iraqi regime had to prove it had no weapons of mass destruction.  
"There is an agreement inside the UN Security Council that the inspections cannot go on indefinitely. At some point, the UN Security Council will have to step in if it sees that Iraq is not cooperating sufficiently," he said.  
"Time is critical. If we want to avoid war, we have to have more cooperation from Iraq," ElBaradei said, stressing: "The ball is in Iraq's

## Hasina, S Leone president meet in Madina

**BSS, Dhaka**  
Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina called on President of Sierra Leone Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah at Green Palace Hotel in Madina Sunday night.  
President Tejan expressed his gratitude to Hasina for sending Bangladeshi troops to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to Sierra Leone during her tenure as prime minister, and lauded the activities of Bangladeshi troops including construction of roads and schools.  
He hoped that friendship and cooperation between the two countries would be strengthened through exchange of technical assistance and technology.  
Hasina thanked the President Tejan for honouring Bangladesh and its people by declaring Bangla as one of the official languages of Sierra Leone.  
She also thanked him for his help in declaring February 21 as the International Mother Language Day by the United Nations.  
President Tejan accepted Sheikh Hasina's invitation to visit Bangladesh.

## SPRINGTIME, FOR SURE



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Red runs riot on a *Krishnachura* (flames of the forest) tree fronting the Sangsad Bhaban in the city yesterday, with the onset of Phalgun, the Bangla month heralding spring.

## Trader shot by extortionists in city

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Extortionists shot a small trader after calling him out of his house in the city's Sutrapur area yesterday.  
The victim was identified as Shahidul Islam, a manufacturer of wrought iron furniture at Postogola.  
Sources said Sharif and four other men called Shahidul out of his Gandaria residence at around 5:00pm yesterday. They took away Tk 6,000 and a gold chain from him and shot him in the leg before leaving the spot.  
Shahidul was admitted to the Orthopedic Hospital.  
In another incident yesterday afternoon at Shakharinagar Lane under the same police station, police arrested a youth named Shamim during a mugging incident.  
Shamim's accomplice managed to flee with the gold chain they snatched from their victim.  
A case was filed with Sutrapur Police Station under the Speedy Trial Act.

## Seven kidnapped boys rescued from Dublar Char

**UNB, Bagerhat**

Seven minor boys, who had been held hostage by pirates, were rescued from Dublar Char on Saturday.  
Acting on a tip-off, Coastguard and Forest Department officials raided Dublar Char, a predominantly fishermen village, and rescued the boys.  
The boys are Shamim Mridha of Tangail, Yusuf Ali of Noakhali, Azadul, M Helaluddin and Shafiqul Bepari of Gaibandha, and Ismail Khan and Helal Khan of Cox's Bazar. All have been sent back to their families, officials said.

# 3 vie for DCC aerial spray contract

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) opened the tender yesterday to appoint the contractor for aerial spraying to destroy mosquitoes.  
The decision to go for aerial spraying was taken, after all other measures adopted by the DCC to eliminate mosquitoes failed to produce any results.  
The local agents of three international companies participated in the bidding, with the highest rate being Tk2.35 crore and the lowest Tk2.20 crore, said the sources in the DCC.  
The chairman of the DCC technical committee, Kazi Abul Bashar told The Daily Star last night that the committee would submit its report today (Tuesday) to Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and he would appoint the contractor.  
But the top officials of the DCC said it would take a few more days to implement the new plan.  
According to the work plan, the contractor would complete aerial spraying in 8 to 15 days covering the whole city.  
DCC insiders said the anti-mosquito drive at the ground level was not conducted effectively. They believe ground operations must be combined with aerial spraying to kill

mosquitoes.  
During the current mosquito breeding season, which will last till the end of March, the DCC could not use larvicide effectively to check breeding of mosquitoes.  
The DCC's health department has failed to handle the mosquito menace, despite having nearly 600 ground spray-men, 625 fogger machines, 1200 hand-spray machines, 90 wheel-spray machines and eight special cars at its disposal.  
There is allegation that after the decision of aerial spraying was taken by the DCC, routine mosquito elimination programmes have almost been abandoned.  
Sources in the DCC have said that at present there is no stock of 'adulticide' at the DCC store for eliminating flying mosquitoes, and the stored larvicide is adulterated. At present the health department is purchasing adulticide everyday, the chief health officer of the DCC said.  
The chief health officer also claimed that the mosquito control programme was geared up from Sunday last, and he instructed the health officers at 10 zonal offices of the DCC to take the necessary steps in this respect.  
Top officials of the DCC said

aerial spraying was delayed on technical grounds. They said the plan for aerial spraying should be conducted carefully, as it has a direct impact on the environment.  
"Taking snapshots of different areas of the city before starting spraying from the sky might be necessary to minimise its negative impact," said the chief health officer.  
The DCC is yet to decide whether it will use helicopters or aeroplanes for aerial spraying.  
The mayor said he had already talked to the air force and the plant protection cell of the agriculture ministry for procuring helicopters. But the three helicopters of the cell are out of order, while the air force planes are not equipped with spraying facilities.  
Repairing the three helicopters will cost Tk two crore, while installing spraying equipment in air force planes will require at least Tk 70 lakh -- not a viable proposition, according to the mayor. The DCC is now looking for alternative ways to implement the aerial spray plan.  
"I am also trying to pursue the government to adopt a long-term strategy for mosquito elimination," the mayor added.

## Dhaka to open ICT outlet in Silicon Valley

**MUSTAK HOSSAIN**

Bangladesh will open an information technology outlet at the Silicon Valley in California by the first week of March.  
Any Bangladeshi software and IT service provider will be able to use the office for sales and display of their products and services.  
"Our IT companies lack track-records of selling software and IT products and need to adopt some techniques," said Enayetur Rahman, who heads the project.  
"What we have to do is advertise our products. If we can set some examples, we will try to use them for future business."  
Rahman believes software and IT service providers can carve a niche in the US market despite the post-September 11 slowdown.  
The Bangladesh Export Diversification Project under the Information Communication Technology Business Promotion Council and the World Bank will finance the project.  
The World Bank will provide US\$400,000 for the 2,000 square-foot office at Santa Clara, heart of the Silicon Valley.  
The government has set a software export target of \$2 billion by 2006.

# AL probe team for Dinajpur blasts

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A team of Awami League lawmakers will probe Thursday's bomb blasts at Dinajpur.  
The team to be led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Advocate Abdul Hamid will be sent there within two to three days. Its report will be made public, acting AL president Zohra Tajuddin announced at a press conference at the party central office here yesterday.  
The decision came a day after the Speaker rejected its proposal for a parliamentary probe into the incident.  
The Dinajpur incident has disproved the government's false propaganda against Sheikh Hasina and Awami League, Zohra Tajuddin said. "The people got proof who are responsible for tarnishing the country's image abroad."  
The incident has also proved that Bangladesh has become a "safe haven" for international terrorist groups, she said.  
"Khaleda Zia and her BNP, because of their lust for power, have destroyed the secular and democratic image of the country by inducting in the cabinet those who openly declared to make Bangladesh a Taliban state," she

said.  
The United States has included Bangladesh in its list of terror-risk countries because of "the government's patronisation of fundamentalist forces," she claimed.  
To restore the country's lost image and to remove its name from the US list, the government will have to stop "political vengeance and human rights violation", she said in her written statement.  
She called upon all democratic forces, civil society leaders, pious people and other forces to resist such terrorist activities.  
The press conference was also addressed by AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil and senior leaders Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Matia Chowdhury. Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amua and Asaduzzaman Noor were also present.  
Jalil said, "We wanted to assist the government in curbing crime and proposed formation of a parliamentary committee to report on the Dinajpur bomb incident, but the government did not want that."  
The government is harbouring fundamentalists, he alleged. The ruling alliance on December 26

## 5 killed as rains, winds lash Pakistan

**REUTERS, Karachi**

Heavy rains and violent winds lashed Pakistan yesterday killing at least five people and injuring more than 70, police and rescue workers said.  
Three people died in two separate accidents on the outskirts of the southern port city of Karachi when the roofs of their houses caved in during the windstorm, they said.  
Heavy rain and wind ripped the roofs of scores of huts built of straw, mud and wooden planks in two villages roughly 30 to 50 km north of Karachi, leaving more than 40 people injured, they added.  
In Hyderabad, 160 km north of Karachi, two people were killed and at least 30 injured in heavy rains, police said, as the roofs and walls of homes collapsed. Several areas were submerged.  
"We have declared an emergency in Hyderabad, where 80 percent of the neighbourhoods are inundated," said Mayor Makhdoom Rafique-uz-Zaman.  
"Education institutions have been closed for three days and relief work is in full swing," he said. Heavy rains also hit the capital Islamabad in the north and Quetta in the east.



Women walk past a poster of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit 2003 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. The upcoming summit will shape up as a major anti-Iraq-war platform for leaders of the 114-nation grouping.

## Abductors threaten to kill Ctg JCD men

**BSS, Chittagong**

Abductors of two local leaders of the Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) kidnapped on February 11 have threatened to kill their hostages unless a ransom of Tk 10 lakh is paid soon, sources said.  
Police and family sources said the kidnappers issued the death threat in a phone message to the family of one of the victims.  
A gang of criminals led by one Mohammad Karim picked up JCD leaders Omar Kazi, 22, son of Siddique Ahmed, and Mohammad Ismail, 20, son of Mostafa Ali, from Jaldi Miarbazar under Banskhali upazila.  
Omar Kazi and Mohammad Ismail are JCD leaders of Sarail union under Banskhali upazila, local BNP sources said.  
Omar Kazi's father filed a case with Banskhali police station on February 14 accusing Mohammad Karim of Madarbari village of Moheshkhali upazila under Cox's Bazar district.

# Indian squad asked not to join SAF Games in Pakistan

**REUTERS, New Delhi**

The Indian government has ordered its athletes not to take part in next month's South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Pakistan.  
"The government has written to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) saying we can't participate in the Games in Islamabad," Suresh Kalmadi, president of the IOA, told reporters yesterday.  
Kalmadi has appealed to the government, whose relations with Pakistan have been strained in recent years because of a dispute over the region of Kashmir, to reconsider their decision.  
"It's unfortunate the government is denying permission to the Indian squad. Non-participation in the SAF Games may affect the forthcoming Afro-Asian Games in India in October," he said.  
India has stopped all bilateral cricket matches between the two countries, but has not been

opposed to the countries playing each other in multi-lateral events at neutral venues.  
The two countries will face-off in a Group A match in the cricket World Cup in South Africa on March 1.  
An Indian squash team traveled to Pakistan last week to participate in the Asian junior championships in Islamabad.  
"The policy of the government so far has been to permit all sports between the two countries except cricket," Kalmadi said.  
"Besides, the SAF Games are not India v Pakistan but regional Games with many countries participating." India alleges that Pakistan has been arming and training militants in Kashmir since 1989, when separatists launched an uprising against New Delhi's rule. Pakistan denies the charge.  
The 15-discipline SAF Games start on March 29.

## Demonstration at Shaheed Minar banned from Feb 20-21

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Demonstration and rally have been prohibited at the Central Shaheed Minar from February 20 evening to February 21 midnight.  
No portrait will be displayed there on February 21 for the sake of observance of the International Mother Language Day in a peaceful and befitting manner, said a Dhaka University press release yesterday.  
Demonstration has also been banned at all entries to the Shaheed Minar, including Palashi, Doel Chatter, Chankahar Pool intersection and at Teacher and Student Center (TSC) areas.  
On February 21, the Dhaka University vice-chancellor will lead a procession from the university campus to the Azimpur graveyard and place wreaths on the graves of martyrs of the 1952 language movement.  
Meanwhile different political and socio-cultural organisations have chalked out various programmes to observe the day.  
Sammilita Sangskritik Jote began its programmes at the Shaheed

## Fire engulfs business hub in Kolkata

**AFP, New Delhi**

A major fire swept through a multi-storied complex yesterday in the bustling trading hub of Kolkata, the Press Trust of India reported.  
The blaze engulfed a four-storied building in the busy commercial centre of Strand Road, a vital trading and shipping link between import-guzzling eastern India and countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand.  
Fire department officials said the approaches to the blazing building were too narrow for fire trucks to manoeuvre quickly.  
Possible casualties and the cause of the fire were not immediately known.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 18		5-55 pm
Feb 19	6-29 am	

  

Prayer Timings		
Feb 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-00	6-06
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation