



PHOTO: STAR

A student of the Fine Arts Institute, Dhaka University, makes a placard yesterday to observe the International Mother Language Day.

Dhaka to support war on terror at NAM Summit

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said Dhaka would reiterate its commitment to global war on terrorism at the February 24-25 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

"We will also call for greater access of products from the least developed countries in the NAM to the markets in developed member-states," he told The Daily Star.

"We expect the summit to take a clear position on the market access issue, not only of products but also of human resources."

Bangladesh will also renew its support to the 114-nation grouping's express objective of nuclear disarmament, poverty alleviation and environmental conservation, he added.

Morshed leaves for the

Malaysian capital tomorrow to attend the pre-summit conference of foreign ministers on February 22.

A two-day preparatory meeting of senior government officials from the NAM countries begins today. The director general of the international organisations desk at the foreign ministry, Liaquat Ali Chowdhury, is already in Kuala Lumpur to attend the meeting.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will lead the Bangladesh delegation at the summit, which will be attended by at least 52 heads of state or government. The last summit in Durban in South Africa attracted 45 leaders.

Khaleda will leave for the Malaysian capital on February 23.

The prime minister would hold bilateral meeting with leaders of leading NAM states on the sidelines of the summit. However, it is still not

certain whether there will be any meeting with the head of governments of the SAARC countries.

The NAM Summit over, Khaleda might attend an emergency session of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on the Iraq crisis as proposed by Malaysia.

However, the current chairman of the 57-member OIC Qatar is yet to give its consent on Malaysia's proposed OIC emergency session.

Qatar, a close US ally, is likely to serve as the command centre of a military campaign.

With a US-led strike on Iraq looming, the summit is likely to take a firm stand on intervention and unilateral action, and non-observance of international law.

It will also concentrate on

Journalists should work to safeguard country's interest: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Journalists should highlight positive aspects of the country to protect its interests, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told a delegation of newly elected executives of Bangladesh Photojournalists' Association when it called on her at the International Conference Centre here yesterday.

"Some newspapers publish grisly photos of death and destruction to boost circulation and also play down government's achievements," the prime minister lamented.

She alleged that false anti-government propaganda by the main opposition, some "so-called" intellectuals and a section of the press are harming the country and adversely affecting expatriate Bangladeshis, and called upon journalists to work with sincerity and patriotism.

Khaleda Zia recalled with gratitude the crucial role of photographers.

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As they didn't attend MP's meeting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least 30 members of a minority community were injured when BNP activists, allegedly led by an MP, beat them up at Shyampur village in Khoksa upazila yesterday.

They were attacked because they did not attend a meeting of the MP.

Sources said Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi MP of Kushtia4 constituency, also secretary of Kushtia district BNP, went to the village to inaugurate a school building.

When the MP reached the school premises with some leaders and activists, he was angry to see very few people present there.

Later, BNP activists led by Rumi attacked some houses of the minority people and assaulted them.

Some of the injured are Pradip, Prasanto, Montu, Sukumar, Ashok and Aswini. They were given first aid.

The victims said BNP activists Anisuzzaman, secretary of Khoksa upazila BNP, Siraj, Badsha and Letu Master took part in the attack.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 20		5-57 pm
Feb 21	6-28 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-02	6-08
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Bush sees no need for new Iraq resolution

NATO endorses defence plan for Turkey, finally

AFP, Washington

UN backing for a US-led attack on Iraq would be useful but is not necessary, President George W Bush said while his ally Britain stalled for time yesterday with calls for the Americans to give diplomacy three more weeks before going to war.

Meanwhile, NATO finally endorsed defence plans for Turkey in the event of an attack while the Americans put pressure on Ankara

to reply over the deployment of troops on Turkish soil as NATO chief George Robertson headed to Washington for high-level talks on the crisis.

"War is my last choice, but the risk of doing nothing is even a worse option," Bush said on Tuesday.

"A second resolution would be useful," he said. "It's not necessary, as far as I'm concerned."

But British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack

Straw were said to be suggesting that a crunch meeting of the UN could take place on March 14.

Newspaper reports in London said both were arguing that the delay could provide enough time to convince France and other doubters that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has failed to cooperate with UN inspectors, and that a new UN resolution paving the way to war should be approved.

And US Secretary of State Colin

Powell accused countries pushing for longer weapons inspections in Iraq of being "afraid" to take responsibility for a possible conflict.

NATO formally approved the deployment of defensive measures for Turkey in the event of war after being paralysed for weeks by one of the worst splits in its history after France, Germany and Belgium refused to vote in favour.

"Alliance solidarity has pre

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2 lakh workers may be evacuated from Gulf

RAFIQ HASAN

Two lakh or more Bangladeshis may be evacuated from the Middle East in the event of a US-led war against Iraq, sources quoted a government letter as saying yesterday.

Dhaka wrote to the International Organisation for Migrants (IOM), a UN body, for assistance in repatriation.

"We are taking preparation to repatriate nationals of the countries like Bangladesh if war breaks out in the Gulf," said a high official of IOM's

South Asian office in Dhaka.

The IOM is writing to the developed countries for funds for evacuation, he said.

The regional office will also coordinate the repatriation of nationals of other South Asian countries and Indonesia and the Philippines.

The IOM provided assistance in repatriating around 1.62 lakh Bangladeshis from Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War.

Meanwhile, an inter-ministerial meeting at the foreign ministry yesterday reviewed the govern-

ment's preparation for repatriation.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan chaired the meeting attended by State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin and representatives of home, defence and communications ministries.

All Bangladesh missions in the Gulf will be asked to take steps for repatriation, meeting sources said.

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Korean subway fire toll may rise as 314 still missing

AFP, DAEGU, South Korea

Sobbing relatives scuffled with police yesterday as investigators probed whether security lapses and human error contributed to a subway inferno here that claimed 125 lives.

The death toll could rise as 314 people were listed as missing and 138 injured, some critically, but Daegu mayor Cho Hae-nyong said he expected the figure would not change much.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Army and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles personnel in a pickup patrol the Mirpur Road near Kalyanpur yesterday. Combined patrolling also restarted in all divisional cities as part of an anticrime drive.

Arsenic shrinks safe water access

NAIMUL HAQ

High percentage of arsenic-affected tubewells in rural areas has shrunk overall access to safe drinking water.

According to available statistics, 75 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water now, down from 97 per cent in 1997.

Whereas the national water policy requires one 'safe water point' for every fifty people, the ratio now is 100 to one.

Sources say 3,571 out of 109,022 deep tubewells that can supply safe drinking water are now out of order. Also, 45,025 out of

1,057,267 hand-pumped tubewells are inoperative.

The percentage of arsenic-affected tubewells is more than 90 in Chandpur, Narayanganj, Noakhali, Laxmipur and Chapainawabganj, and between 20 and 40 in Faridpur, Gopalganj, Comilla, Jessore, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon.

In one Chandpur upazila, Hajiganj, all the tubewells are contaminated. On average, there are some 30,000 tubewells in one upazila.

Presence of arsenic in groundwater beyond the World Health Organisation standard was first

detected in 1993. Three years later, the government declared arsenic contamination a national disaster.

Twenty-nine per cent of some 1.2 million tubewells the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) installed are arsenic-contaminated.

Alternative arrangements for safe drinking water in the affected areas, provided by the government, are mostly insignificant and confined to a few families.

Although the government encourages use of surface water, filtered with locally developed

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