

Blair faces Labour revolt, Blix seeks more time

Defiant Saddam dismisses exile deal

AFP, London

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair was facing a revolt in parliament yesterday over the looming war in Iraq, which appealed to the United Nations to slow the US-British drive for military action.

Baghdad got a boost from chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, who said his experts needed "a few more months" to keep working inside Iraq before any war to force Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to disarm.

A defiant Saddam, who has held power in Baghdad since 1979, meanwhile declared in a rare inter-

view that he would never accept a deal to go into exile, vowing instead to die on his native land.

US and British insistence that war will be needed to bring Saddam to heel was leaving Blair, Washington's closest ally, facing perhaps his worst political embarrassment since taking office six years ago.

British MPs were lining up against his hardline stance on Iraq, and press reports said more than 100 - most from his Labour party - would vote against or abstain on a government motion giving Iraq a "final opportunity" to disarm.

With Britain and the United

States pressing UN Security Council members to back their proposed resolution that could pave the way to war, the Baghdad leadership called on the rest of the Council to strike it down.

"Security Council members have a big responsibility," said Iraq's Ath-Thawra newspaper, the official mouthpiece of Saddam's ruling Baath party.

"It is their legal and moral duty to confront these new US attempts decisively in order to protect international peace and security," it said.

UN arms chief Blix, who is due to update the Council on the progress of inspections, said his teams

should be given more time to complete their work.

"Even if Iraq immediately, actively and unconditionally cooperates with us, we would still need a few more months," he told German weekly Die Zeit, after Tuesday saying there were "positive" elements to Baghdad's disarmament.

Saddam said in an interview with US television to be aired later yesterday: "I was born here in Iraq... We will die here."

White House officials have said Saddam and his top generals would be legitimate targets in any war.

The Iraqi leader also said his

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Debate in JS over judges appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament yesterday witnessed an unscheduled debate between a minister and a senior opposition lawmaker over the non-confirmation of services of six Supreme Court judges.

The debate took a sour turn as Law Minister Moudud Ahmed and Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta called each other 'Frankenstein.'

The debate sparked off when Suranjit stood on a point of order and said, "The law minister would be identified as a Frankenstein unless he removes the guillotine of law on the judiciary."

An enraged law minister replied: "You are the only Frankenstein in this parliament."

He also requested the Chair to expunge the word "Frankenstein."

The AL lawmaker blamed the law minister and the government for what he said destroying the judiciary by not giving permanent appointment of six judges to the High Court as recommended by the chief justice.

Suranjit said the law minister has ignored the recommendation of the chief justice and appointed "party men" as judges of the High Court. "The judiciary is at stake in the hand of this government."

Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui, however, asked Suranjit to sit down, as any such discussion would need prior notice. He also said the topic didn't fall under the point of order.

The Awami League repealed the provision for the chief justice's recommendation on appointment of judges through the fourth amendment to the constitution, he said.

Moudud, however, told the Speaker that if Suranjit's word (Frankenstein) was expunged, then he could have his word expunged too. Otherwise, he would keep it on record.

Thereafter, Suranjit sought floor. But to avoid further debate, the Chair allowed another member to speak.

Another member of Al-Hiqma arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Detectives yesterday arrested another member of Islamic militant group Shahadat-e-Al-Hiqma from the city's Horogram Bazar areas.

The arrested was identified as Azhar Ali Mridha, 45.

Mridha, one of the associates of Al-Hiqma leader Sayed Kawar Hossain, was nabbed under Section 54, police said.

5 BCL men hurt in clash with JCD at Khulna Mohsin College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Election to the Khalishpur Mohsin College student union was suspended yesterday following an armed clash between activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) that left five BCL men injured, sources said.

The injured include VP candidate Mashur Rahman and AGS candidate Emdadul Haq Rony who were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital with multiple stab injuries.

City unit of BCL in a press statement alleged that riot police earlier deployed in and around the campus remained inactive when armed cadres of JCD swooped on voters and BCL candidates at 11:00 am yesterday and snatched ballot boxes at gunpoint.

JCD cadres also stabbed college professor Nazmul Hasan when he tried to resist them, the statement said.

Army and BDR personnel chased the JCD men away, eyewitnesses said.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 27		6-00 pm
Feb 28	6-22 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-06	6-11
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia shares a light moment with a delegate yesterday at an informal meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) leaders after the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

OIC
Organisation of the Islamic Conference

Majority of members held talks on Iraq in Malaysia

Members:
56 states, plus Palestinian Authority*
All OPEC member states, except Venezuela

Founded:
Rabat, Morocco in 1969

Key aims:

- strengthen Islamic solidarity, cooperation
- safeguard Islamic holy sites
- support Palestinians
- and racism, colonialism
- cooperation with non-members

Oil production of OIC member states in 2002

Approx. 40%

Rest of the world

*Recognised as a state by OIC

OIC talks use of oil as a weapon to avert Iraq war

THE STAR/ANN, Kuala Lumpur

An informal meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), which included some of the world's biggest oil producers, agreed here yesterday to look into the possibility of using oil as a weapon to fend off a war in Iraq.

Though the 47 leaders conceded that it could be dangerous and might lead to negative repercussions, Dr Mahathir Mohamad said if they did not consider it Muslim nations may not be able to influence events in their favour.

"We may have to pay a high price but most of us agree we should look into it and not just dismiss it," the

Prime Minister told a press conference after the meeting. "Although some countries are worried about the repercussions, they feel this option should be considered or the OIC will not be able to exert influence in its favour."

The informal discussions marked the first time a meeting had been called by the 57-member grouping to specifically discuss issues affecting members. It came a day after the 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit ended with a strong anti-war declaration.

Of those present, 21 were heads of government, including Iranian President Seyyed Mohammad

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Indians intrude into village, set houses afire in Fulgazi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A group of Indian nationals yesterday intruded into a village in Fulgazi upazila of the district and set two houses afire as Indian Border Security Force (BSF) gave them cover.

As tension mounted at the Feni border following the incident, a flag meeting between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the BSF will be held today.

BDR sources and local people said about 60 farmers from Rajnagar village on Indian side of the border crossed over to Sreepur village near the border, set fire to two thatched houses and immediately returned under BSF protection.

Witnesses said the incident took place as some farmers from Sreepur village protested blocking a canal Kahua--flowing into Bangladesh from the Indian side.

'Bankers' ignorance of ground realities makes for failure in banking'

UNB, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday once again reprimanded the management, board of directors and managers of banks, saying their "ignorance of ground realities" was to blame for the mismanagement in banking.

"Problems in banks are created internally," he told a seminar at Sonargaon Hotel while referring to the lack of understanding of bank directors and executives of the impact of globalisation and international situations like the Iraq crisis.

On Saturday, the minister had

criticised bankers for failing to analyse the reasons behind their poor performance.

Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) and Axiom Technologies Limited jointly organised the seminar on "Risk Management -- Ultimate Challenge for the Banks" for mobilising awareness on the requirement of automated risk-management system in modern banking.

Bangladesh Bank governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, deputy governors Mohammed Nazrul Huda and Muhammad Rumez Ali, Eastern Bank managing director K Mahmood Sattar and some other

top bankers participated in the discussion chaired by BAB chairman Syed Manzur Elahi.

Expressing his surprise at the title of the seminar, the minister said, "Risk management is the first grammar," and stressed the need for reform in the management for the sake of healthy banking.

He said automation was all right but it would not work when bank management lacks healthy data and adopts wrong policies.

Saifur said banks would be put in jeopardy if outflow of funds were

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Five alleged dacoits beaten to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mob yesterday beat five alleged dacoits to death in Chandanaish, police said.

Police recovered the bodies, but could not trace their identity. Police said the dead men were aged between 30 and 35 years.

A group of 10 dacoits were chased and attacked by hundreds of villagers at Muradabad in Chandanaish at around 4.00am, while they were fleeing after committing a robbery in Lalankhil village of Patia thana, police said.

Police added that five other dacoits managed to escape unhurt. Police recovered a locally made gun, a grill-cutting hand machine and a dagger, which were lying beside the bodies of the dacoits.

The dacoits stormed into the house of one Hasan Mia of Lalankhil village under Patia bordering Chandanaish near the Chittagong-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

Body of one of the robbers, beaten to death by a mob at Chandanaish in Chittagong yesterday, being taken to a police van.

Mongla port chairman refutes allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Top officials of the Mongla Port Authority and users of the port met yesterday to discuss the prevailing situation that is forcing ships to keep away from Mongla port.

The chairman of the Mongla Port Authority, Commodore (ret'd) Khurshid Alam, presided over the meeting attended among others by frozen food exporters.

The chairman, while refuting allegations of corruption, said that foreign ships did not get as much financial benefits at Mongla port as they got at Chittagong port. He said that a ship is expected to anchor at Mongla port tomorrow.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Police get 'important clues' to Rajshahi blast

Another accused remanded, hunt for others on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A magistrate's court yesterday placed another accused in the Dangipara blast case -- Zarina -- on a three-day remand as police gathered "many important information" from two other accused remanded earlier.

Two of the seven accused in the case --BNP activist Abdul Mannan and Ibrahim Sheikh Lalon, an employee of city Jubo League general secretary Shirajul Islam Khokon -- were placed on a four-day remand on Monday.

Earlier on Sunday, a bomb went off inside Zarina's house at Dangipara, leaving three persons injured. Police later recovered two grenades and a huge quantity of

ammunition from the houses of Zarina and Mannan, who is also a ward commissioner of Rajshahi City Corporation.

Officer-in-Charge of the Shah Mokhdum Police Station Rabindranath Biswas said police gathered "many important information" from Mannan and Lalon. And on the basis of those, three teams of plainclothes policemen are now engaged in a manhunt for nabbing the other culprits.

A police source said they are looking for at least 17 people including Khokon.

They are also trying to trace the arms and bombs thought to have been shifted from the two houses after the blast and before arrival of police.

Quoting the two remanded persons, the source also said many of the city's BNP and Jubo Dal leaders had "close links with arms dealer Khokon." Jubo Dal leaders also used to frequent Khokon's 'arms depositories' at the houses of Zarina and Mannan.

Meanwhile, the home minister's statement in the parliament on Monday claiming that the Rajshahi blast was part of a deep-rooted conspiracy of the Awami League 'embarrassed' the investigating authorities here, a senior police official said on condition of anonymity.

An army team from Bogra cantonment took away the two grenades for test under a court's order.

Armed attack on Shibir office at Jhenidah: 4 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Four activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) were injured when unidentified persons threw bombs and opened fire on Shibir office at Parkpara in the town at around 7:30 pm yesterday.

The injured are Abdul Aziz, Tareque Musa, Ramizuddin and Sayeem Uddin. They were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar hospital.

Earlier on the day, two Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists were injured when ICS activists threw bombs on JCD men on Government KC College campus.

Following the incident, police arrested seven Shibir activists from the campus.