

Baghdad pledges to submit report on nerve gas, anthrax

REUTERS, Baghdad

The United Nations said yesterday Iraq, seeking to avert a threatened US invasion, would submit a new report on VX nerve gas and anthrax stocks in a week's time, as Baghdad scrapped more of its banned missiles.

A key US and British charge against Iraq has been that it has failed to account for all the chemical and biological agents that were slated for destruction after the 1991 Gulf War.

Britain pooh-poohed the latest Iraqi concessions. "Given the history of deception, cheating and lies it is understandable that we should be approaching what we are seeing at the moment with a degree of scepticism," a government spokesman said.

US preparations for war continued apace with US defence officials saying Washington had extended the targets being attacked by air patrols in "no-fly" zones over Iraq

to include weapons that could hinder a ground invasion.

Iraq says it has destroyed all its chemical and biological arms, but chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, due to report on Iraqi compliance to the UN Security Council at week's end, says Iraq has provided no details to back up that claim.

Iraq and UN arms experts discussed on Sunday Baghdad's proposal for "quantitative verification" of VX and anthrax. Iraq says it has carried out recent excavations that proved it has destroyed "important quantities" of the banned substances.

"Iraq will be providing a report on the VX and anthrax in a week's time," Hiro Ueki, spokesman for UN weapons inspectors in Baghdad, told Reuters.

Ueki also said six more Iraqi al-Samoud 2 missiles and two empty warheads were destroyed on Monday at Taji base, some 40 km north of Baghdad.

It was the first time warheads related to the missile were destroyed. Ueki said earlier that the destruction of casting chambers for the missiles would be completed by today.

Baghdad began on Saturday to destroy some 120 missiles, meeting a key UN deadline. Ten of the missiles, whose range Blix says exceeds the 150-km limit allowed by UN resolutions, were scrapped on Saturday and Sunday.

Iraq has turned the destruction of its banned missiles into a test of world opinion on its cooperation with the United Nations, warning it could stop if the United States ignored the UN and continued to press for war.

But the missile destruction and the offer of a new report on VX and anthrax led oil traders to believe the war timetable could be pushed back. US light crude fell 75 cents to \$35.85 a barrel and Brent crude dropped 58 cents to \$32.21.

OIC meeting Morshed leaves for Qatar today

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan leaves for Qatar today to attend an urgent OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) Summit on March 5 in Doha to discuss means of overcoming the Iraq crisis.

Ameer of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who is the current chairman of the 58-member OIC, has convened the extraordinary OIC summit at a critical time when a US-led western coalition prepares for a war against Iraq.

Talking to newsmen, the foreign minister said he was going to explain Bangladesh's position on the issue of Iraq that peace must be restored by any means avoiding war.

"We want peaceful resolution of the Iraq crisis without war. Multilateralism must prevail over unilateralism," he said.

He further said the UN arms inspectors must be given sufficient time while Iraq must comply with UN Resolution 1441, adding that other countries like Israel that violate UN edicts against armament should also be "pressured" to comply with the resolution of the world body.

"Under the present situation, we feel that if there is any destabilisation, it will not only affect the Middle East but go far beyond," he said.

Morshed said he would represent Bangladesh at the summit as the prime minister is preoccupied at home.

OIC foreign ministers will have a preparatory meeting at Doha today ahead of the emergency summit on March 5.

On February 26, the heads of state and government of OIC countries had an informal consultation over Iraq on the sidelines of NAM Summit at Kuala Lumpur.

The foreign minister, who will lead a Bangladesh delegation to the OIC summit, is expected to return home on March 6.

A Foreign Ministry release later said the Bangladesh delegation is expected to highlight the importance of a "consensus-based approach to find a peaceful solution" to the present crisis.

"Bangladesh will also call for greater solidarity both in terms of articulation of their (OIC members') common concerns and need for actions aimed at promoting peace and stability," it said.

BSF takes back six stranded Indians

BSS, Jyppurhat

The six Indians, who had been languishing on the Hiti border following an unsuccessful push-in bid by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on February 19, were finally taken away by the Indian border guards early yesterday morning, BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) and eyewitnesses said.

The welcome move came three days ahead of a BDR-BSF flag meeting at the sector commander level on March 6 to decide the fate of the six, official sources said, adding that the meeting will still be held as per schedule.

The six Hindi-speaking Indians, among them three babies and a woman, remained stranded at the zero line near pillar no 248/508 for 12 days until they were taken away at 1:45am yesterday, BDR sources said.

The six had been going hungry since last Friday as BSF stopped giving them food.

Later, BSF took away the belongings of the victims at 6:30am yesterday in the presence of BDR and local people.

Earlier on February 6, BSF in a similar way took back their 213 stranded citizens from Nazimguni zero line at Patgram border in Lalmonirhat, three days before a scheduled Deputy Director General-level flag meet-

ing between BDR and BSF.

BDR foiled about 70 push-in bids by BSF through the Indo-Bangla border since February 13.

BDR jawans, Ansar, VDP (Village Defence Party) and the people of the frontier area continue to remain vigilant to foil any BSF push-in bids through the north-western borders, sources said.

However, a BBC report quoting BSF No 5 Battalion Commandant Dhansingh Rathore last night said the six were taken away by the BDR.

BSF men patrolling the area in the morning did not see the six, Rathore told BBC.

BSS from Rajshahi adds: Two Bangladeshi fishermen were abducted by the BSF from Sarengpur area under Godagari upazila on February 28, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources confirmed yesterday.

The abducted persons are Selim, 19, son of Darul Huda and Abdul Halim, 20, son of Abdul Maleque, both from Sarengpur village.

BDR sources quoting eyewitnesses said a BSF team from Radhanagar Border Out Post (BOP) under Lalgola Thana of Murshidabad district intruded into the Bangladesh riverine area and abducted the two fishermen with their boat and nets.

Local BDR authorities are preparing to send a letter to their BSF counterpart to protest the incident and to bring back the fishermen home, the sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

The Awami League lawmaker, Asaduzzaman Noor, speaks at a roundtable of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at the Chittagong Club auditorium yesterday. The AL frontline leader Suranjit Sengupta (second from left) and Editor of the Prothom Alo Matiuur Rahman (third from left), among others, also spoke.

Anchors Sri Lanka

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Africa's most successful bowler, taking three for 41.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Sri Lankan innings in the World Cup Pool B day-night match against South Africa at Kingsmead on Monday:

SRI LANKA	
Atapattu c sub (Peterson) b Hall	124
Jayasuriya run out	16
Tillekeratne c Boucher b Kallis	14
Jayawardene c Boucher b Hall	1
De Silva c Smith b Ntini	73
Arnold b Pollock	8
Sangakkara c Pollock b Kallis	6
Vaas run out	3
Muralitharan b Kallis	4
D Fernando not out	1
Extras: (lb-2, w-11, nb-5)	18
Total: (For nine wickets in 50 overs)	268

SOUTH AFRICA: Shaun Pollock (captain), Graeme Smith, Herschelle Gibbs, Gary Kirsten, Boeta Dippenaar, Jacques Kallis, Mark Boucher, Lance Klusener, Andrew Hall, Makhaya Ntini, Monde Zondeki.	
Hall	10 0 62 2
Kluserner	4 0 31 0

Toss: Sri Lanka
Umpires: Steve Bucknor (Wis) and Srinivas Venkataraghavan (Ind)
TV umpire: Peter Willey (Eng)
Match referee: Clive Lloyd (Wis)

BCL calls strike today to protest question scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the cancellation of the preliminary test of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) will observe an all out student strike at all educational institutions across the country today.

"We demanded the resignation of the commission chairman and punitive actions against the culprits involved in the leakage of questions," BCL President Liakot Sikder said last night.

We also demand proper investigation into the matter, he added.

BCL is the student wing of the main opposition in parliament, Awami League.

Liakot said BCL's movement would continue until all the demands are met and further programs would be declared following today's strike.

Earlier, BCL brought out a procession and held rally at Dhaka University campus in support of the strike.

Mayoral polls AL backs Pir at public rally in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Awami League (AL) yesterday officially declared its support to Enayet Pir, a non-AL mayoral candidate from Khas Nagarik Parishad, sources said.

The decision was announced at a large public meeting at the Central Shaheed Minar here to commemorate the deceased district AL president Mohiuddin Ahmed.

The meeting also demanded immediate mid-term general election, resignation of the government and trial of Khaleda Zia for the "murder" of 54 persons during the Operation Clean Heart.

AL was unable to field its own candidate for the Barisal City Corporation (BCC) mayoral election for "unavoidable reasons", and blamed the government for creating the situation.

Presided over by acting president of district AL Dr Mokhlesur Rahman, the meeting was addressed by AL central leaders MA Jalil, Amir Hossain Amlu, Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury and Abdur Razzak, ex-MLP Latif Siddique, Jubo League chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak, AL central organising secretary Mahmudul Kabir Mahna and local leaders.

'Criminal' Jahangir's accomplice arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An accomplice of notorious criminal Kala Jahangir was arrested when he attempted to extort money from a person at Mirpur on Sunday afternoon.

Detectives arrested Moniruzzaman near the fire brigade office at Mirpur Section-10 as he went there to collect Tk 10,000 from a resident of Mirpur Majar Road Colony, Dulal.

On the same morning, a person claiming to be Kala Jahangir phoned Abdul Haq, a relative of Dulal, and demanded Tk 3 Lakh.

He also asked him to come to the fire brigade office immediately with Tk 10,000.

Haq informed the detectives about the threat who then trapped Moniruzzaman at 4:00pm.

4 kidnapped from Raozan brick kilns

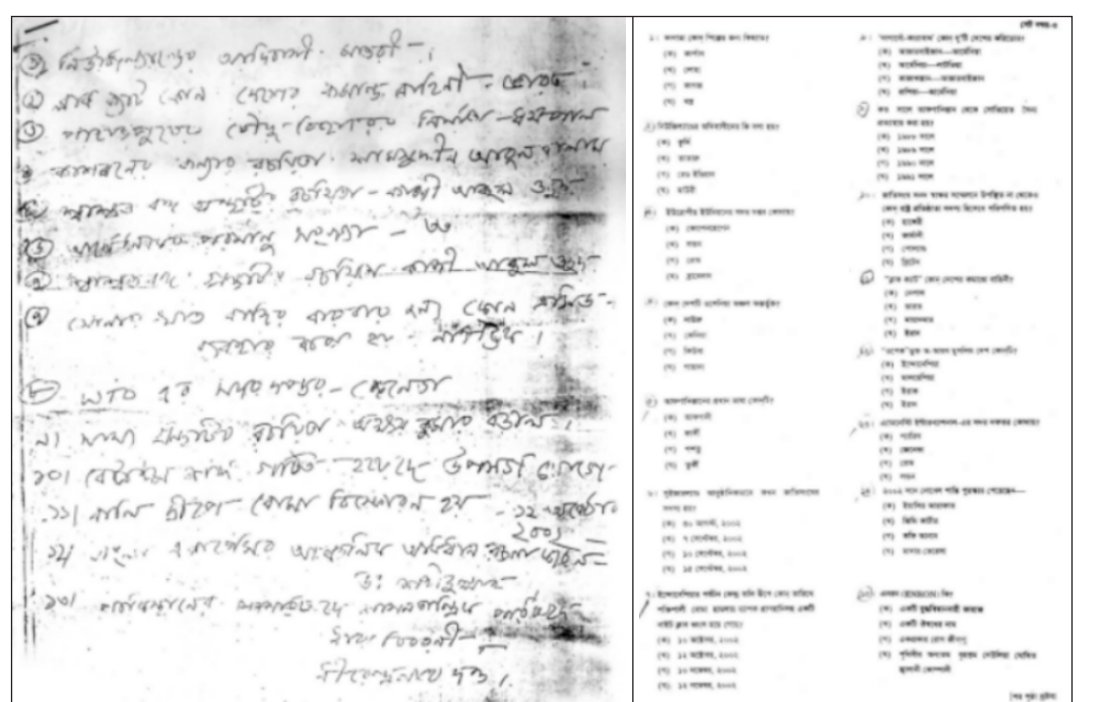
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Four people including two managers of two brick kilns were kidnapped in Raozan Monday night.

Sources said some armed miscreants, allegedly led by notorious Azizul Haq went to the Syed Company and Abu Taher alias Gura Meah brick fields in Wahidkerheel area of Dabua union and kidnapped two managers and two staff at gunpoint.

The kidnapers later demanded Tk 20 lakh over telephone for their release, sources said.

Sources alleged Azizul Haq, prime suspect in the sensational Gyanojoyti Mahasthabir murder case, summoned owners of some 40 brick fields of the upazila to a firm house at Dabua two days ago. He (Azizul) ordered each brick field to pay him Tk 2 lakh every month.



A copy of answers of the leaked 24th BCS preliminary test questions (left) and the original question paper (right).

Accent on military might raises regional tension

Seminar on S Asian security underway in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mistrust among the South Asia nations and emphasis on the military concept of security have created new problems instead of solving the existing ones, speakers said at a two-day seminar held in the city.

They also said people should be at the centre of all activities for establishing a comprehensive security framework in South Asia.

Industries Minister MK Anwar said traditional security considerations should co-exist with non-traditional security aspects, which are concerned mainly with good governance and welfare of citizens.

The minister was speaking at the inaugural session of the regional seminar on "Comprehensive Security in South Asia: Economic Dimensions" co-organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and Delhi Policy Group (DPG).

"A state grappling with poverty, unemployment, lack of social cohesion, human rights violations and environmental degradation remains vulnerable to social upheaval and disintegration despite having military strength," MK Anwar said.

"South Asia is perhaps the only region in the world where lack of

regional security is the consequence of collective default rather than design," said Mufleh R Osmani, Chairman of the Board of Governors of BISS.

C Ram Manohar Reddy, Deputy Editor of the Indian newspaper The Hindu, said India's defence expenditure is over 20 per cent of the total central government expenditure.

"Only interest costs exceeds the outlay on defence," he said.

"India's military expenditure is more than what the government of India spends on any social activity, it is more than the annual capital expenditure on economic assets," he said.

"An Indian nuclear weaponisation programme that would cost over 0.5 per cent of the GDP a year is equivalent to the annual costs of introducing universal elementary education in India," Reddy said.

Prof Muzaffar Ahmed of Dhaka University said migration is becoming a major issue in this region, but the policy planners are failing to take it into consideration.

"This is only natural that people will migrate from underdeveloped areas to developed ones where they have scope to make a better living," he added.

Prof Muinul Islam, immediate past president of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA), said

the regional trade in South Asia has been taken over by smugglers, with the volume of informal trade between Bangladesh and India being more than double the formal one.

He said if the north-eastern Indian states, Nepal and Bhutan are given access to Chittagong port, it would be economically beneficial for Bangladesh. But politics is holding back the idea from implementation.

Prof Islam also mentioned transshipment facility to India, through Bangladesh territory, as another 'casualty of politics'.

On the other hand, he said globalisation has brought some non-issues, like export of gas, to the forefront and many politicians are toying the line of the international oil companies (IOCs).

"However, the reality is that we do not have enough gas to export to any country" Prof Islam added.

Prof. Syed Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University, Dr Md Masum of Jahangirnagar University, Abdur Rob Khan of BISS also spoke on the occasion among others.

Dr Atiur Rahman and Mahfuz Kabir of BIDS, AKM Atiqur Rahman of North South University and Prabhu Ghatge, former ADB official in New Delhi, presented papers on different dimensions of security in the region.

Moudud: Lawyers

FROM PAGE 1

provision for government to take Chief Justice's recommendation in appointment of judges in the higher judiciary. But the then Awami League government abolished the provision through the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution in 1975, he claimed.

His statement followed an opposition lawmaker's comment that lawyers were anguished at the government's refusal to accept the Chief Justice's recommendation for confirmation of services of six judges.

Rising on a point of order, Awami League deputy Rahmat Ali alleged that the government demolished the podium erected by lawyers for their sit-in to protest its refusal to confirm the judges' services.

Ali said the protesting lawyers during their sit-in had raised slogans like 'smash the black hands of the law minister.' He said anguished lawyers from across the country will hold a convention in the city on March 14.

Before the Speaker could give his ruling on Ali's point of order, Obaidur Rahman of BNP stood and blamed "pro-Awami League law-

yers" for "damaging the sanctity of the Supreme Court". He said he was at the Supreme Court on that day. "The registrar took the necessary step to maintain law and order", he said.

Moudud then took the floor and raise his left hand. "See, I have no black hands". He said agitating lawyers has the right to stage sit-in but they raised a podium in front of the office of the Chief Justice without taking his (Chief Justice) permission.

Sammilito Ainjibi candidates for SC Bar polls

BSS, Dhaka

Sammilito Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad yesterday announced the names of candidates for the coming election to the Supreme Court (SC) Bar Association to be held on March 30 and 31.

The candidates are Barrister Rokomuddin Mahmood (president), Subrata Chowdhury and Sirajul Haq (vice-presidents), Mahboob Ali (secretary), Alauddin Ahmed Dulal (treasurer), and Sheikh Mohammad Morshed and Mohammadullah Kichlu (assistant secretaries).

Member candidates are Abdul Hye, Nuruzzaman Khan Hiru, Satyendra Chandra Bakta, SM Fazlul Hoq, Nizamul Hoq Nizam, Giasuddin Ahmed and Eiti Hossain Swappa.

RAT recovers phensidyl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a predawn raid, the Rapid Action team (RAT) seized 2,995 bottles of phensidyl and arrested a drug peddler from the Titipara slum in Gopibagh yesterday.

The RAT raided the slum at about 4:00am and arrested drug peddler Ziaul Huda Tapan, 32.

According to his statement, the team later recovered a cache of phensidyl from a van parked near the slum.

The RAT also recovered Tk 79,200 in cash from the van. The Titipara slum is well known as a drug-trading zone. Criminals also take shelter in the slum.

Demestic help raped in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An orderly has allegedly raped a domestic help of the additional police super in the district.

The alleged culprit was identified as Manjurul Islam.

According to the victim, Manjurul had called her to a room and then raped her. The incident took place on February 28 morning.

No other members of the house were present at the time, sources said.

A case was filed in this regard after the medical examination of the victim.

However, the girl went missing after the examinations.

No trace has been found of the victim till filing of the report yesterday.

3 rifles looted from Teknaf forest office recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The three rifles looted from the Maddhya Neela Forest Beat office in Teknaf upazila after the murder of a forest official there on Sunday were recovered by Teknaf thana police from the bank of the Naaf river.

Police also arrested three persons in connection with the murder of forest official Farhad Uddin Talukdar.

The arrested Abdul Khaled, his brother Selimur Rahman and ex-UP member Nur Ahmed are now being interrogated by police.

District police said they recovered the machete that was used to kill Farhad Uddin Talukdar. The autopsy of Talukdar's body was done at the Cox's Bazar sadar hospital morgue yesterday.

Earlier on February 8, another armed gang attacked Apara Junction Forest Beat office and looted two rifles, one SLR, one foreign short barrel gun and 51 rounds of bullets.

Tannery units

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Thousands of people travelling through the areas adjacent to the tanneries and residents on its banks are exposed to serious health hazard. Many residents have complained of irritation in eyes and skin.

Meherpur

FROM PAGE 12

Modabbar Hossain and Deputy Inspector General (Khulna) Enayetullah Dewan visited Gungni yesterday.

The college student was declared dead on arrival at the Kalapara Health Complex in Patuakhali at 10:00pm Sunday, according to our Barisal correspondent.

Up to 45 people attacked the Dhankhali Government Primary School centre for the Union Parishad polls under Kalapara Police Station and tried to snatch the ballot boxes.

To control the situation, police and ansars fired, killing 23-year-old Zakir Bepari, a student of the Mazhar Uddin Biswas College, and injuring Hazu Howlader and Chunnu.

Election officials said they were counting votes when the mob attacked the polling centre.

The injured were admitted to the Barisal Medical College Hospital with bullet injuries.

Police claimed that an ansar was robbed of his rifle in the mob attack.

Khulna blast

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was closed on a deputy commissioner's order.

Police arrested Vice-President of the central committee of the Jubo League Shahid Iqbal Bithar at the district Awami League office Sunday night.

He was shown as an arrestee in the sergeant Ariful Islam murder case and sent to jail.

The Awami League, the Jubo League and the Bangladesh Chhatra League have termed the arrest of Bithar politically motivated.

Leaders of the four-party alliance declined to comment on Saturday's incident.