

## World Water Forum stresses capacity building on flood control in S Asia

AGENCIES, Dhaka

The wrap-up session of the third World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan on Thursday underlined the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the understanding and forecasting of floods to improve data collection and capacity building on flood control in South Asia.

It recommended policy framework for flood control, commitments linked with the Millennium Development Goals and summit on sustainable development targets and capacity building aimed at helping the poor to minimise the negative effects of floods, a press release of Water Resources Ministry said here yesterday.

Water Resources Minister LK Siddiki attended the session. The wrap-up session summed up the proceedings of the sessions that were held under the theme of flood.

Siddiki also met Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Environment Science of the State Department Anthony 'Bud' Rock.

They discussed various issues

relating to water management including Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and financial and technical cooperation in water sector.

The Bangladesh minister highlighted the problem of arsenic contamination of groundwater in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Japanese Parliament member Shin Sakurai has assured Bangladesh of doing his best to secure Japanese financial and technical assistance to solve the country's problems in water management, flood control and arsenic contamination.

Sakurai's assurance came after he was apprised of the problems by Bangladesh engineers at a discussion on "Bangladesh Towards Integrated Water Resources Management" in Kyoto yesterday, according to a message received here.

The Japanese Parliament member chaired the discussion that was arranged on the sideline of the third World Water Forum. Water Resources Minister LK Siddiki, who was present as chief guest, also sought Japanese cooperation in this regard.

## Protest against Iraq attack continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different quarters in the city still continuing their protest against the US-led war on Iraq.

Shamrazzobad Birodhi Mancha yesterday, protesting the attack on Iraq, burnt the effigies of George W. Bush demanding immediate stopping of the war.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) at a rally in the city yesterday alleged that the main aim of the war of George W. Bush was to create an American subservient government in Iraq.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association yesterday at a meeting protested the war and appealed towards the world leaders to take the issue for a peaceful solution under the umbrella of the United Nations (UN).

They also expressed their grave concern over loss of lives and properties of the Iraqi nationals.

Eight organisations in a joint statement said that Bush has to be quizzed to the history if a single man, woman or child of Iraq being killed in this war.

They are Bangladesh Krishak Federation, Bangladesh Krishak Sava, Bangladesh Adibashi Samity, Bangladesh Vasmam Sramik Union, Bangladesh Vasmam Nari Srarik Union, Bangladesh Grameen Buddhijibi Front, Gonochaya Sangkritik Kendra and Biplobi Jubo Sava.

Gonatantrik Biplobi Jote at a rally blamed the government alleging that the government did not allow to hold a press conference by the Iraqi ambassador which was a 'naked expression' of slavery foreign policy to the USA.

Bangladesh private medical Practitioners Association protesting the war termed it as 'anti-human and threat for the world peace.'

Jamiyat e- Ulama-e- Islam Bangladesh asked for stopping the war urging the US army to get back their home.

## Iraqi civilians

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He also expressed his optimism about an early solution to the Iraq crisis.

The foreign secretary said Bangladesh could take part, if needed, in the reconstruction of Iraq under multilateral arrangements after the war.

He refuted press reports that government has advised the state-run media to be careful about displaying news items on the war and the anti-war demonstrations.

Meantime, the foreign ministry sent a rejoinder to a news item published in 'The Daily Star' yesterday under the headline 'State media asked to handle war news carefully'.

The ministry denied that any instruction was given by it to 'the authorities of Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and BSS (news agency) not to highlight reports in favour of Iraq and demonstration against the USA.'

"The ministry of foreign affairs categorically denies that any such instruction was given. The report is baseless and totally misleading," it said.

## New Colony

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ners, architects, engineers and NGO activists gathered at the new colony yesterday under the banner of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA).

They appealed to the prime minister to save the playground and open spaces for the sake of thousands of people of the locality.

BAPA declared an hour long sit-in everyday and would collect signatures of citizens in favour of its movement. The movement will continue until its demand is met.

Officials at the housing department under the ministry of housing and public works said they would build 500 flats and sell those to government officials and employees.

The contractors of the project, reportedly backed by the brother of a minister, threatened the protestors of dire consequences if they tried to stop the project. Local people said some musclemen were also active in the area to intimidate the protestors.

More than three hundred labourers were seen digging up the playground yesterday in utter disregard of the sentiments of local people.

## PM back home

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same flight. Earlier, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was given a hearty send-off as she left Yangon ending a three-day official visit to Myanmar.

Myanmar Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Senior General Than Shwe and Madam Than Shwe and senior ministers were present at the airport to see Khaleda Zia off.

Myanmar boys and girls wearing traditional multicoloured dresses and waving miniature flags of the two countries gave a rousing farewell to the Bangladesh prime minister.

A group of children presented bouquet to Khaleda Zia at the tarmac before she boarded the aircraft.



The potholes-strewn Jhilpar Road in Motijheel is filled with stagnated rainwater. People using the road face the trouble.

## US asks world to sever ties

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will name interim replacement representatives in diplomatic missions that can reopen and truly represent the interests of the Iraqi people," Bouchersaid.

The department has also expelled the three diplomats who work at the Iraqi Interests Section at the Algerian embassy in Washington, ordering them to leave by Friday, he added.

The United States closed its Polish-run Interests Section in Baghdad in February.

A senior US official told AFP that a similar request would be made soon at the United Nations, but Boucher declined to comment on the UN issue, noting that the rules for accreditation at the world body were different.

The cable containing the instructions was sent to the US embassies overnight Wednesday after President George W. Bush launched the now-underway conflict in which he has vowed he will topple Saddam, Bouchersaid.

Bush has pledged to replace the totalitarian Baghdad regime with a democratically elected government after a temporary period of US occupation and the creation of an interim Iraqi authority.

The decision to send the orders was made in anticipation of the fall of Saddam's government at the hands of allied forces, and the need to hold

in place and protect Iraqi assets governmental assets abroad for that new authority.

"This is the right thing to do and this is the right time to do it because we will prevail," he said.

"We're asking them (to do this) because we think the defiance of UN resolutions, the ruthless nature of the regime has come to a point where people should no longer want to have their representatives there," Bouchersaid.

There was no immediate indication of how many countries would agree to the US request, although Washington got a decided mixed response to a March 6 call for many of the same 62 nations to expel Iraqi diplomatic personnel it believed were spies and a threat to US interests.

Nor was it clear where the expelled diplomats would go since their country is now under attack, or what non-official Iraqis living outside Iraq would be able to do in the event they needed consular assistance.

Boucher said Washington was working to find third-party nations to handle the consular needs of ordinary Iraqi expatriates in the 62 countries, but that the diplomats were out of luck.

"That's their problem," he said when asked what an expelled Iraqi ambassador or charge d'affaires

would do once his or her accreditation was revoked and the embassy's assets frozen.

A senior State Department official later held out the possibility that the United States might seek to recruit some of those diplomats as intelligence assets by offering them political asylum, but refused to firmly commit to the idea.

"There's no blanket asylum being offered here, but I'm sure we'd be interested in talking to anybody who might want to talk to us," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

## US request

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Iraqi embassies, suspend the accreditation of Saddam's ambassadors and expel senior diplomats.

"We have come to know about it from the international media. But we have not received any request so far from the US embassy here in Dhaka," Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said yesterday.

However, according to reports, US state department spokesman Richard Boucher said, "Through our diplomatic missions overseas the US has made a formal request to the countries to suspend Iraqi diplomatic presence on a temporary basis."

## US-led troops face resistance

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have been deployed to fulfil Bush's vow to rid Iraq of its suspected chemical and biological weapons and to oust Saddam.

The United States has also launched a diplomatic and financial offensive against Iraq, asking countries around the world to close Iraqi embassies and going on the hunt for what it termed "blood money" estimated at six billion dollars stashed away by Saddam and his associates.

In Britain, US air force B-52 heavy bombers were seen taking off for the first time since the war began, possibly presaging an escalation in the US bombing campaign, which has so far been limited to strategic targets.

But Turkish airspace remained closed to US warplanes amid reports of growing tension

between Ankara and Washington over Turkey's bid to send its troops into northern Iraq.

US troops had advanced 75 miles (120 kilometers) inside Iraq since storming across the Kuwaiti border overnight, seizing their first desert airstrip but avoiding cities, US Army and Marine officers said.

The strategic city of Basra, defended by a Republican Guard division, is considered a key early target in the US-led campaign, vital to Iraq's economy because it controls the country's oil terminals in the Gulf and its only access to the sea.

Hoon said resistance was encountered outside the key Gulf port city of Umm Qasr south of Basra, although it was expected to be under coalition control shortly.

British troops secured oil instal-

lations and established a beachhead on the Fao peninsula and are now setting their sights on Basra under a plan to deliver humanitarian supplies, British officers said.

Hoon said the peninsula was "a vital target, because there had been fears that Iraqis could open the floodgates and pour oil into the Gulf. That, at least, has been prevented so far."

Thousands more US troops were ready to enter southern Iraq from Kuwait in the coming hours, an officer said, while tanks from the Marines punched their way up the country's centre, and US infantry rolled to the east.

Encountering little resistance, US Marines took 25 Iraqi soldiers prisoner after they surrendered, a Marine officer said.

The torching of the wells failed to spike oil prices, but stock markets rallied and the dollar edged up slightly against other currencies.

In Baghdad, residents were bracing for another night of air raids.

At least three buildings in the heart of the capital were destroyed by missiles or bombs Thursday night and officials said 37 people were wounded.

The conflict has sharply divided the world, with France, China and Russia saying it violated international law, although Bush has said more than 40 nations support the US-led operation.

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that the war threatened to spill over to other regions, while Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said Moscow would ask the United Nations to rule on the legality of the attacks.

## UP polls

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local governments, including 12,000 female ones, were elected for a five-year term.

The CEC's comments and plea for troops deployment in the local body polls drew flak from the government.

Sources said there is now a move for Syed's exit from the post of CEC. In the last parliament session, two ruling party lawmakers even demanded his removal.

For the first time ever, the Election Commission this time wanted deployment of army to ensure security during local body polls under a political government.

## Cry Justice

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father, to protect our child, to keep her safe? And suppose she did not die but was maimed. What if she lost a leg or an arm or both? Oh, we would love her still, but she would not be the same person. She would perhaps lose her beautiful smile, her loud laughter, her prankish and irresponsible nature—all of which were such integral part of her personality. What about her lovely voice? (Her classical music teacher thinks a lot of her). Will she sing again? What if she survives but is so traumatised by the bombing that she loses her sanity and lives on like a zombie.

My thoughts as an Iraqi father continued and I asked for what crimes I and my family were being subjected to this bleak future? Because I have Saddam as my leader? Well I haven't chosen him nor have I ever been asked what I thought of him. So why should I and my family be punished for his crimes? I heard on television that US President Bush thinks that Saddam may attack the US or its interest in the future. So am I to understand that my family and I have to die today so that Saddam cannot attack the US tomorrow? I was never asked by Saddam as to what I wanted and today I was again not asked whether I want the Americans to save me. Saddam imposed his will on us and now the Americans are imposing theirs.

To continue the hypothetical story, my country waged a totally unjustified war with Iran for ten years and at that time most of the western countries including the United States supplied most of the biological and chemical weapons to Saddam, for possessing which he is being persecuted today. If Saddam had gone then we would have been saved of a megalomaniac for many years now. No, at that time he was the darling of the west fighting the fundamentalist Ayatollahs. For ten years our people, our soldiers lost lives and our resources were wasted on an western agenda and a megalomaniac's personal ambition. The stalemate in Iran proved too costly and when the latter started winning a compromise was worked out and the bleeding stopped. Saddam's ambition unfulfilled, he occupied Kuwait in '90. That was when he really fell foul of his western and, particularly US, patrons. Then followed the decade long sanctions. In all this millions of Iraqi people suffered more and more, sixty percent of our children became malnourished and suffered from stunted growth, and we as a people lost our potential.

When the twin towers fell in New York, I and my family, along with the rest of the world felt horrified at the death of the innocent

and condemned silently (for I was never allowed to speak publicly from my conscience) this wanton act of cowardly terrorists. On that day I had no idea that the mad and vengeful act of a few in the US would have such a devastating affect on me, my family and my fourteen years old daughter. In spite of the most strenuous efforts by the most powerful and technologically advanced country in the world no link could be established between any Iraqi activity and those of al-Qaeda. And yet today we are to bear the most destructive consequences of that universally condemned terrorist act.

Rageh Omar, the BBC correspondent in Baghdad, describes the siren that warns the inhabitants of the Iraqi capital of the impending air attack as "the terrible sound that signals another night of devastation". How accurate but remote for the millions of his programme's viewers. But it is the description of an impending reality for me and my family. The "night of devastation" as he calls it, could be the last night for me, my wife and my fourteen years old child.

The bombs that await us, the cruise missiles that are aimed at our cities, the 'shock and awe' (it could just as well be the name of a latest dance of a packaged fast food like 'shake and bake') campaign that lies in store for us, the tanks that are racing towards our cities, the incomparably equipped soldiers who will soon enter our homes are all meant to 'liberate us.' Yes, they will liberate us from our self-respect, our dignity and in cases of many, of our lives.

Suddenly I snapped out of my thoughts at the loving nudges from my daughter saying "Abboo you are not listening to me". As my thoughts returned to the safety and love of my home my inner being rebelled against the attack on the people of Iraq.

As a human being, as a husband, as a father, as a journalist, as someone proud of my culture and religion, as a conscientious citizen, as someone nurtured in universal values of tolerance and diversity of peoples and brought up to respect others' rights, as a strong believer in freedom and democracy, as someone who learnt in school-books that "Might is not Right", as a believer in the superiority of reason over brute force, and whose understanding of modern history is that injustice, aggression and domination cannot bring any good to anybody and that such attempts only pull us back and not take us forward, I reject this war on the basis of every modern and democratic value that I so dearly hold in my heart.

## Road accident

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among the dead. Thirteen of the injured were admitted to sadar hospital.

Of the victims, six were identified as Shafiqul Islam, 45, of Ramchandrapur village in Chapainawabganj, Mizanur Rahman, 26, of Jaldhaka in Nilphamari, and Rafiqul Islam, 28, of Sundarganj, Mita, 30, of Fakira Bazar, Mostafa, 27, and Siddiq Hossain, 40, of Sundarganj village of Gaibandha district.

Identity of the rest of the dead could not be known immediately.

All the bodies have been kept at the Timgail Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Nothing could be known about the truck driver as he fled the scene after the accident, said police.

DC Abdul Hakim Mondal and SP Mahabubur Rahman visited the spot.

A case was filed with local police station.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of 22 people in the accident.

In a condolence message, she

## Land ports

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Circle said there are 92 small privately-owned godowns established haphazardly in the vicinity of the land port.

Another official mentioned that there is no public warehouse at Hili.

A leader of Hili Land Port C & F Agents Association, Md Musfiqur Rahman Chowdhury, welcomed the government steps allowing private sector in the land port operation business.

Meanwhile, some C & F agents at Hili alleged that smuggling increased due to the embargo on import of many goods under various categories through Hili border, affecting revenue earning of the government.

Assistant Commissioner of Hili Custom Circle Bazulur Rahman Khan said his circle realised only Tk.36.31 crore in customs duty, VAT and other regulatory duties and surcharges in fiscal 2001-02 as against the target of Tk.84 crore.

He attributed this to the embargo on import of rice, sugar, powder milk, newsprint, yarn and many other products in the last fiscal. He however noted that with the lifting of embargo on rice import through Hili last month, revenue collection is on the rise.

## Fatal flu virus

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reply to The Daily Star.

The travellers are advised to monitor their health for at least seven days, contact physicians if they become ill with a fever accompanied by a cough or difficulty in breathing and inform their physician of their recent travel.

If passengers suspect infection, they should contact the airlines or airport authorities with no delay. The airlines or airport authorities should then contact an appropriate medical response unit, which may involve working with a CDC quarantine office, said the CDC.

If a passenger is on an aircraft and suspects infection before takeoff, he or she should be advised to disembark and offered medical treatment.

If it is in-flight, the passenger should leave the aircraft as quickly as possible upon arrival at next destination and be offered medical treatment.

Researchers at the CDC are exploring every possibility to find the cause of SARS. "At the early stage of investigation, it seemed more likely that SARS is caused by an organism that we have less experience with rather than a commonly occurring, known organism," said the CDC.

Reports from Hong Kong and Germany suggest that SARS may have similar traits to paramyxovirus -- a family of viruses that include many common, well-known viruses causing respiratory infection and childhood illnesses including mumps, measles and croup. But it is not certain that paramyxovirus is the cause of SARS.

Symptoms include cough, shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing and pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome.

## BTV

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tion.

An international tender will be floated soon to purchase the equipment, said the sources.

The BTV has 16 terrestrial transmitters, ten of them age-old and installed in 1972. At least three transmitters need replacements, the sources said.

## Villagers

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Many villagers said they are selling land and property out in fear of reprisal.

The district administration has set up a temporary police outpost in the village to provide security to the villagers.

But police protection does not seem effective, as the gang intimidates the villagers to withdraw the cases.

The 17-member outpost is now a burden on the poor villagers, as they have to supply food to policemen. Every villager gives the outpost five to 20 kilogram of rice each month, locals said.

The deputy commissioner of Bhola, Kabir Md Ashraf Alam, wonders why the villagers supply rice and says food supply for the policemen is sufficient.

The villagers say they need a permanent police camp in Annada Prashad.

A permanent police camp is necessary for the village but the administration is not able to set up any camp right now because of administrative complications, says the deputy commissioner.

## World Water Day today

BSS, Dhaka

The World Water Day will be observed today in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world seeking greater global understanding to ensure safe drinking water for the future.

The day is celebrated with due importance each year since the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in 1992 designating it as the World Water Day (WWD).

The theme of this year's WWD is "Water for the Future". The theme emphasises that it is essential to achieve the Millennium Development goal to halve, by 2015, the number of people living without safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the lead UN agency for observation of WWD.

In a message on the eve of the occasion, UN secretary general Kofi Annan said: "Freshwater is essential for healthy ecosystems, sustainable development and human survival itself."

"All over the world, pollution, over-consumption and poor water management are decreasing both the quality and quantity of available water," Annan pointed out.

He said: "Overall demand for water already far outpaces population growth. If current trends continue, two out of every three people on earth will suffer moderate to severe water shortages in little more than two decades from now."

The UNEP Executive Director Klaus Toepfer in his message said: "The goal for WWD is to inspire political and community action and encourage greater global understanding of the need for more responsible water use and conservation."

He said governments, individuals, NGOs, community and youth groups, business, industry and the media each have a major role to play.

To mark the day in Bangladesh, NGO forum for drinking water supply and sanitation has organised a drama in Dhaka, and symposiums at its 14 regional chapters across the country.

The drama will be performed at amphitheatre (Muktomoncho) at Dhanmondi, Road 8. Eminent playwright Professor Dr Selim Al Deen will unveil the programme at 4:00pm.

Besides, the forum will hold a national seminar on the subject at BETS Centre at Dhanmondi. LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will attend the seminar as chief guest.

The United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) will organise a symposium today at 5:30pm at the Scout Bhaban at Kakrail in the city.

## Anti-war protest

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correspondent.

Addressing the rally, Obaidul Haque, Khatib of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque, said President Bush is the prime enemy of human civilisation. Had there been unity among Muslim countries, the US and its allies could not have invaded Iraq.

After occupying Iraq, US will extend its clutches to other Muslim countries in the Middle East, he said.

Anwar Zahid, former minister in HM Ershad's government, said the war is only for Iraq's oil. The US may strike Bangladesh also for its gas resources, he said.

After the rally, a huge procession paraded the city streets under heavy police guard. There was no untoward incident.



An activist of the Islami Shashantanra Andolon shouts protests in Dhaka yesterday against the US-led attack on Iraq.