

Bangladesh is a voice of moderation: Rocca

Two Congressmen resent inclusion of Dhaka in NSEERS programme

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is a voice of moderation among developing countries, in the Islamic world and in South Asia, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca said during a Congressional hearing.

During the hearing Thursday on South Asia, Congressmen Joseph Crowley and Robert Wexler

expressed strong resentment over the US administration's decision to include Bangladesh in the National Security Entry Exit Registration System (NSEERS) programme.

The Congressional hearing was held in the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee of the House International Relations committee on the topic: "The US and South Asia: Challenges and Opportunities for American

Policy."

Apart from Rocca, Ambassador Wendy J Chamberlin, Assistant Administrator of USAID, was invited to make a statement before the Subcommittee, according to a message received here yesterday.

Rocca, in her statement as main witness at the hearing, praised Bangladesh as the top contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping

missions, and an active player in regional and international organisations.

She noted that Bangladesh has made impressive strides in economic development, dramatically reducing its birth rate, improving literacy, delivering more social services and empowering women through education and employ

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Homeministry putsoffAdnan Samiconcert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The scheduled concert of Indian star singer Adnan Sami was postponed yesterday following a home ministry order.

As no prior announcement was made by the organiser, hundreds of people waited for hours at the Army Stadium, the venue, and left disappointed.

Some people telephoned The

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 23		6-11 pm
Mar 24	5-59 am	

Prayer Timings		
Mar 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-15
Maghrib	6-17	6-22
Esha	7-35	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

World snubs US requests to expel Iraqi diplomats

AFP, Paris

A growing numbers of countries on Friday turned down a request from the United States to expel Iraqi diplomats, prompting Washington to shrug off their resistance as US-led forces pushed into Iraq for a second day.

Strong anti-war governments such as those in France, Germany, and Russia rejected the request to close Iraq's embassies and expel its diplomats until new authorities were in power in Baghdad.

The Netherlands, Poland and Portugal, which the United States has identified as members of a "coalition of the willing" backing the war in Iraq, also turned down the request.

Washington said on Thursday it was asking governments worldwide to sever ties with the regime of

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, shut down Iraq's embassies and freeze its assets until new authorities were in power in Baghdad.

But France, Germany and Russia swiftly dismissed Washington's request.

"France believes this request is a matter of sovereignty. At the moment there is no reason to respond positively," said foreign ministry spokesman Francois Rivasseau.

Germany has "no current plans" to comply with the US request, a foreign ministry spokesman said on Friday, although Berlin this week ordered the expulsion of four Iraqi diplomats for activities "incompatible with their diplomatic status" -- a euphemism for spying.

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Eight-hour hartal Anti-war protests surge in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-war activists marched through the city streets yesterday and burnt the US national flag and effigies of President George Bush during an eight-hour hartal, separately called by left-leaning 11-party alliance and right wing Islamic Shashantantra Andolon.

The protesters shouted slogans and carried banners and placards denouncing the 'American-British imperialist invasion of Iraq'. They demanded an immediate end to it.

Vehicular movement in the capital was less than usual and normal life was partially affected during the hartal from 6 am to 2 pm. Rickshaws however plied as usual.

Some activists of the Islamic Shashantantra Andolon were seen rolling and screaming on the streets, blasting Bush and Blair (British prime minister) for 'attacking' Iraq without any mandate of the UN Security Council.

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PHOTO: STAR

Activists of the Islami Shashantantra Andolon roll on a road, as police form a line to intercept their procession at the Paltan crossing during an eight-hour hartal to protest the US-led military action against Iraq.

PM's call to discard hartal

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked political parties to discard hartal saying that development should be the priority of politics.

"Hartal should be deleted from the political analogue," she said urging national unity for advancing the nation toward progress.

Disunity is a major reason for backwardness, she added.

The prime minister was addressing Zia Parishad leaders and members who made a courtesy call on her at the International Conference Centre yesterday afternoon on the occasion of its 16th founding anniversary.

Khaleda Zia called upon all to resist nefarious propaganda against the country at home and abroad.

Lauding the role of the Zia Parishad, she recalled the purpose of setting up the council and hoped

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HC stays buildings on playground at New Colony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked the government to stop the construction works at New Colony in Asad Gate.

The housing department under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works is implementing a project to build 500 flats to be sold to government officials and employees.

A Division bench issued the stay order upon a writ, filed by two local residents and New Colony Krira Chakra, asking the government to show cause.

Local member of the parliament Advocate Mahbubuddin Ahmed moved the petition before the court.

Minister for Environment and Forest Shajahan Siraj yesterday

joined hands with the environmentalists and local residents to save the playground and open spaces of the new colony at Asad Gate from contractors and unscrupulous government officials.

"We will do everything legally and the authorities have no right to defy local people's demand," said the minister during a visit to the project site.

The minister and the state minister of the same ministry, Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, promised to arrange a meeting with the representatives of the local residents and the ministry of public works and housing in order to reach a solution. A meeting is likely to be held tomorrow at the environment ministry.

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SAF Games postponed

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan has postponed the ninth South Asian Federation Games which were due to start here this month because of the war in Iraq, officials said yesterday.

The regional games were to have been held in the Pakistani capital from March 29 to April 7 and attended by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan.

"The games have been put off for an indefinite period because of the war in Iraq and the public sentiments in the country," a sports ministry official told AFP.

The SAF Games have been postponed three times since early last year because of tensions between arch-rivals Pakistan and India.

India pulled out of the event last month citing "the potential threat from extremist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and Taliban" but Pakistan said it would go ahead with hosting the event.

BPC dispels fears of fuel crisis

Stock adequate, more in pipeline

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

The country has adequate stock of fuel and is unlikely to face any crisis of it if the US invasion of Iraq is not prolonged, highly placed sources said.

The state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) yesterday dispelled fears of any fuel crisis and possibility of any price hike of it.

Chairman of the BPC Solaiman Chowdhury told The Daily star that the present stock of the fuel could easily meet the requirement for 60 days. Besides, fuel now in the pipeline for import after opening of letters of credit (LCs) might meet the demand for another 100 days, he added.

"We should not worry about any

fuel crisis or price hike of it" Solaiman said.

Meanwhile, a ship carrying one lakh tonnes of crude bound for Chittagong port sailed from Abu Dhabi yesterday. It is likely to arrive here shortly, raising the stock, the chairman said. "We don't see any chance of fuel crisis in the country as our stock is adequate to meet the present demand".

The existing stock of fuel includes three and a half lakh tonnes of refined oil and two and a half lakh tonnes tons of crude. The stock of refined oil might meet the requirement for 35 days and that of crude for 25 days more.

Solaiman mentioned that LCs were already opened for importing

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90 more back home from Kuwait

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 1,200 Bangladeshis have flown back home from Kuwait till yesterday evening since the US-led forces launched a war on Iraq, according to government sources.

Of them, 90 Bangladeshis came home yesterday. So far 900 defence personnel and 312 civilians, who had been working at different companies in Kuwait, took Biman, Emirates, Saudia and Kuwait Airways flights to get back home, sources at the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment said.

The task force on repatriation of expatriate Bangladeshis from the Middle East in the event of the war

yesterday reviewed the overall repatriation situation.

The meeting observed that the rate of repatriation was still quite normal. The war has as yet not affected the flow of Bangladeshi workers bound for the Middle East. Remittances were also not affected by the war, the meeting was told.

Presided over by State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam, the meeting was attended by representatives from 11 ministries concerned.

The state minister said the International Organisation for

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