



PHOTO: STAR

(From left) Activists of the Bangladesh Mohila Awami League burn an effigy of US President George W Bush; leaders and activists of Samajtantrik Sramik Jote shout slogans; freedom fighters stage a demonstration; and members of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission form a human chain in Dhaka yesterday to protest the Anglo-American war on Iraq. (More pictures on page 11)

Big anti-war rally in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Over 50,000 people protested the US-led invasion of Iraq at a mammoth rally at the Lalbagh Maidan yesterday.

All sections of people from every nook and corner of the city, religious leaders of all faiths and politicians joined the protest, called by Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Holding banners, symbolically blood-stained placards and effigies of George Bush and Tony Blair with shoe wreaths around their necks, people joined the rally in processions raising slogans against the US and Britain.

After the rally, the mayor along with the religious leaders led a huge procession stretching over one kilometre. The processionists paraded the city streets chanting anti-war and anti-American slogans.

The rally adopted a declaration, read out by noted businessman M Salimullah, urging the people to keep hoisted black flags atop buildings and houses for a week as a mark of protest against the mass killing of civilians in Iraq by the invaders.

The declaration also called for
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Ever so slowly, the suburbs were turned into battlefields

ROBERT FISK, THE INDEPENDENT, UK

The Iraqi bodies were piled high in the pick-up truck in front of me, army boots hanging over the tailboard, a soldier with a rifle sitting beside them. Beside the highway, a squad of troops was stacking grenades as the ground beneath us vibrated with the impact of US air strikes. The area was called Qadisiya. It was Iraq's last front line. Thus did the Battle for Baghdad enter its first hours, a conflict that promises to be both dirty and cruel.

Beside the highway, the Iraqi armoured vehicle was still smouldering, a cloud of blue-grey smoke rising above the plane trees under which its crew had been sheltering. Two trucks were burnt out on the other side of the road. The American Apache helicopters had left just a few minutes before I

arrived. A squad of soldiers, flat on their stomachs, were setting up an anti-armour weapon on the weed-strewn pavement, aiming at the empty airport motorway for the first American tanks to come thrashing down the highway.

Even the city's police force was sent to the front, its officers parading in a fleet of squad cars through the central streets, waving their newly issued Kalashnikov rifles from the windows.

What is one to say of such frantic, impersonal -- and, yes, courageous -- chaos? A truck crammed with more than a hundred Iraqi troops, many in blue uniforms, all of them carrying rifles which gleamed in the morning sunlight, sped past me towards the airport. A few made victory signs in the direction of my car. I confess to touching 145km an hour on the speedometer

-- but of course one had to ask what their hearts were telling them. "Up the line to death" was the phrase that came to mind. Two miles away, at the Yarmouk hospital, the surgeons stood in the car park in blood-stained overalls; they had already handled their first intake of military casualties.

A few hours later, an Iraqi minister was to tell the world that the Republican Guard had just retaken the airport from the Americans, that they were under fire but had won "a great victory". Around Qadisiya, however, it didn't look that way. Tank crews were gunning their T-72s down the highway past the main Baghdad railway yards in a convoy of armoured personnel carriers and

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Enhance ad rates, withdraw VAT: BSP

BSS, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad (BSP) in a meeting here yesterday demanded allocation of Tk 20 crore in the revised budget for payment of bills of the government advertisements published in newspapers.

It also demanded enhancement of advertisement rates and withdrawal of VAT on advertisement, a BSP press release said.

Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Daily Ittefaq Barrister Moinul Hosen presided over the meeting.

Editor of News Today Reazuddin Ahmed, editor of Sangram Abul Asad, editor of Inqilab AMM Bahauddin, editor of Dinkal Kazi Siraj, editor of Ajker Kagoj Kazi Shahed Ahmed, editor of Independent Mahbubul Alam, editor of Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of Manab Zamin Matur Rahman Chowdhury attended the meeting.

Boat capsizes death toll rises to 72

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The death toll from Friday night's boat capsizing in Surma river in Chhatak rose to 72 with recovery of 10 more bodies yesterday.

These include bodies of four under-15 girls, a six-year-old boy and a 35-year-old woman.

Only the boy and one of the four girls have been identified as Shahabuddin, son of Alauddin and Labona, daughter of Firoze Miah. Both were from Sonai village in Kalamkanda upazila in Netrokona district, officials said.

The two identified bodies will be handed over to their families and the rest will be kept at Sunamganj Sadar Hospital morgue for some time, they said.

The victims' families will be given compensation soon, the Deputy Commissioner of Sunamganj said. The matter has been communicated to the Prime Minister's office, he said.

A three-member inquiry committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner Apurup Chowdhury has been formed to probe the tragic incident. It will submit its report within seven days, the DC said.

Meanwhile a case has been filed against the driver of the cargo vessel, MV Sigma-1, which hit the boat.

The mechanised boat with over 150 people sank near Mallikpur village, about six kilometres off Chhatak upazila headquarters.

14 drown in Naaf

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 14 people drowned when an engine boat sank in the river Naaf.

A Teknaf bound engine boat, with about 20 passengers, was returning from Mongdaw township of Myanmar Saturday evening and it sank in the river, after being caught in a nor'wester at around 6.00am, local sources said.

Local people saw three dead bodies floating in the river. They immediately informed the local BDR men. BDR jawans recovered one body from the river on Saturday night.

1,200 to join 'suicide squad' from Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 1,200 Bangladeshis have registered their names in a "suicide squad" to fight the US-led aggression on Iraq, sources said.

A new platform of various Islamic organisations styled Mritunjayee Squad is recruiting people to train and send them to Iraq.

"People across the world are united now against Bush and Blair. They are the new Hitlers of the world. Come forward to save humanity from the clutches of these warlords," read a leaflet of the Islamist groups.

A six-day campaign programme was arranged, inviting Islamic minded people to register their names to go and fight the allied forces. This campaign would continue up to April 11.

On the first day, they stationed themselves in front of the National Press Club and on the second day at Muktagong to enlist the names of the interested.

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BTTB restructuring body for talks with employees

STAR REPORT

The committee for restructuring the state-owned telecom has decided to negotiate with both officers and employees of the enterprise before finalising its report after facing flak from unionists, sources said.

The BTTB Sramik Karmachari Union yesterday brought out processions to protest the restructuring of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

He said the committee has decided in principle that the BTTB should be

transformed into a 100 per cent government-owned company with financial autonomy.

The committee is considering adopting the recent Pakistan and Sri Lanka rehaling. Both the countries gave a corporate shape to their state-owned telecom companies to foster benefit and increase tele-penetration.

Bangladesh, with a population of 130 million, has only 10,000,000 cellular phones provided by four private operators and 650,000 fixed line phones provided by the BTTB.

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Govt asks officials to shed apathy

REZAUL KARIM

The government yesterday asked secretariat officials and employees to attend office in time and refrain from going out frequently in the interest of breathing dynamism into state activities.

The directives came in a circular issued by Cabinet Secretary Dr Saadat Husain in view of the rising trend of 'late arrival, early departure and frequent visit' syndromes of government officials. High placed officials said over the last few months general employees 'began following in the footsteps' of secretaries, additional secretaries and joint secretaries, who do not attend work before 10am.

"In fact there is no fixed timing for high officials for some months," a top official said, requesting anonymity.

General employees picked up the sluggishness of their bosses and it is really very difficult to get an employee before 10am, he added.

The secretariat sits from 9am to 4pm on all working days, excepting

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 7		6-17 pm
April 8	5-44 am	

Prayer Timings		
April 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-23	6-28
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation