

## Chinese villagers riot over plan for SARS quarantine centre

AFP, Beijing

Up to 2,000 villagers torched a school earmarked as a SARS quarantine centre, ransacked government offices and overturned cars in China's first reported instance of social unrest related to SARS, officials said Tuesday.

The mayhem in Chagugang town, a rural area not far from the heavily populated port city of Tianjin, happened Sunday night after the Tianjin government decided to convert a school into a SARS isolation facility.

"The plan was to transform the high school into an isolation centre," said a Chagugang government official, who did not want to be named, told AFP.

"When nearby villagers heard this they feared they would be caught by the disease.

"The head of the villages explained to the people but they wouldn't listen." He said about 2,000 angry residents marched to the school and ransacked it, smashing windows before setting it alight.

"They went to the school and burned the school. It can't be used any longer," he said.

"Then they went to the local education office and smashed it to pieces. Then they went to the town government office and smashed the whole building, breaking windows, removing doors and

throwing them out of the windows.

"They broke in and smashed everything, overturned vehicles. All facilities are out of use now."

According to the official, armed police and anti-riot police arrived but by that time the villagers had run away.

"Today it is okay but at that time the situation was very serious," said the official, who estimated the crowd was 2,000-strong but that only a core of 30 to 40 people took part in the destruction.

"The rest cheered them on," he said. Another report adds: Chinese banks have started putting incoming banknotes in 24-hour quarantine before returning them to circulation in an effort to contain SARS, state media said Tuesday.

The measure has been triggered by fears, so far with no evidence, that Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) could spread via banknotes, the China Daily reported.

"When ... banknotes come back in, we first sterilize them with disinfectant, and expose them under ultraviolet light for four hours," said a spokesman for the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

The central bank has also raised the inflow of new banknotes into the system in a bid to fight the dreaded virus, which has killed about 60 in Beijing alone.

## Principal

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principal, demanded the removal of the superintendent. The students accused him of sexually abusing a female student when she went to his house a couple of days ago.

The principal "intentionally" withdrew the assistant hostel super, Shamim Afroza, to hide the ugly incident as she filed a general diary with the Rajpara Police Station of the city. She had complaining that the female students of the hostel were feeling insecure. The students said that the principal paid no heed to their complaint.

The following day, the students and teachers jointly protested the April 15 orders and pressed the principal to ask Abdus Samad Mondol to hand over his duty to Shamim Afroza. Mondol however refused to oblige to them.

On the same day, the principal had left his office without notifying anyone and returned after 12 days, on April 28. Then he formed a six-member committee to investigate the incident.

Just after forming the committee, the principal granted the hostel super a 10-day leave, although he was supposed to appear before the committee.

When the news spread out, the students got infuriated and locked the principal inside his room yesterday morning.

Professor Gulam Mustafa was released at around 4:30pm after he had signed a consensus assuring a stern action against the responsible teacher. The consensus was followed by a meeting of the college's academic council.

## Darkness

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grid tripped and eighty per cent of Dhaka city plunged into darkness. The DESA restored power to the PMO and the prime minister's residence after repairing the fault with the Rampura grid.

The Ulan and Basundhara substations restored power after about ten minutes.

Moghbazar, Shantinagar, Shiddheswari, Tejgaon, Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Paribagh, Dhaka University area and Mirpur were in blackout until 8:30 last night.

Power supply would be restored to all city areas by tonight, said an official.

The Met office hoisted signal No. 2 for river ports until this morning, alerting vessels.

Launch services from the Sadarghat terminal remained snapped for more than half an hour, said an official of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The BIWTA allowed the launches with a length of above 65 feet to ply after the storm died down.

The nor'wester also lashed Bogra at 89km, Tangail at 56km, Sylhet at 50km and Madaripur at 46km an hour.

Another nor'wester speeding at 60-80km an hour may hit Pabna, Bogra, Sylhet, Madaripur, Kushtia, Comilla and Noakhali this morning, says the weathercast.

## BazlulHuda

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case as a division bench earlier gave a split judgement.

Justice Karim rejected the petition prompting the defence to file a Criminal Miscellaneous Petition with the Appellate Division. But the petition was rejected in normal course, as Huda's lawyer did not appear before the Appellate Division later, Supreme Court sources said.

Huda is one of the 12 convicts sentenced to death by the High Court in the Bangabandhu murder case.

## Flag rule

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man of Bangladesh Ocean Going Ship Owners Association (BOGSOA).

"We need protection because we invested around Tk 400 crore in this sector," he observed.

The Ministry of Shipping had first placed the proposal before the cabinet meeting last week seeking full scrapping of the ordinance. The ministry said it would hamper the export-import business.

It said both the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) were against the ordinance.

Later, it changed its position proposing for bringing some amendments to the ordinance, exempting the container feeder services from mandatory waiver certificate before loading and unloading goods at Bangladesh ports.

According to sources, the ministry submitted the proposal following pressure from the Singapore based Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC) led by a ruling party stalwart.

The source said the latest proposal was also against the interest of the local ocean-going ship owners.

The local ship owners expressed concern saying that exempting the container feeder service from the purview of the ordinance would not protect the local investment in the shipping sector.

According to them, the amendments would virtually push the local shipping business into the full control of foreign ship owners.

# Housewife, 2 others murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people including a housewife were killed in separate incidents yesterday.

Sajeda Begum Saju, 25, was found dead at her Madartek residence yesterday morning. Police said her husband might have strangled her following an altercation.

The couple got married in 1993. Saju's husband, Jahangir Alam, had an extramarital affair with another woman since 2001.

"They often quarreled about this matter. The neighbours had arranged an arbitration on Monday night and solved the problem for the time being," police said quoting the first information report (FIR).

Sajeda's mother-in-law informed Sajeda's brother-in-law, Jabbar Mollah, yesterday morning that she died in her sleep. Jabbar and other family members

went to the house and found marks of injuries on her throat.

Police recovered the body from the house and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy. Jabbar later filed a case with the Sabujbagh Police Station accusing Alam of the killing.

Alam is absconding. In another incident, unidentified hoodlums shot dead an alleged criminal at Wasaga in Shyamপুর yesterday noon.

Anisur Rahman Nasu, 32, was shot in the head at about 1:00pm at Wasa gate. The gang also chopped him to ensure his death. Police said Nasu might have been killed by his rivals.

Hajera Bejum, the wife of the victim, filed a case at the Shyamপুর Police Station. In Mohammadpur, armed miscreants gunned down an unidentified young man last night.

Police recovered the bullet-riddled body of the young man behind a primary

# Saddam revellers

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preachers to protest against the continued presence of US troops in Iraq.

He said he did not have an exact number for the injured who were being treated at five different hospitals in Falluja.

Falluja hospital director Ahmed Ghanim al-Ali said 13 people had been killed and at least 75 wounded. Some local people gave higher estimates, saying the protesters had been demanding that troops vacate a school in the town.

But US Lieutenant Christopher Hart said a crowd of 100 to 200 chanting people approached his men, who opened fire after two gunmen with combat rifles appeared from behind the crowd on a motorcycle and stated shooting.

Some people in the crowd then also fired at the troops, he said. He put the death toll at between seven and 10.

The incident came amid volatile anti-US feeling in the country, nearly three weeks after US tanks rolled into central Baghdad marking the end of Saddam's 24-year grip on power.

On Monday, US forces killed at least four Iraqi fighters in a firefight in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, an American military officer said.

Reuters correspondent Kieran Murray saw two US Army positions came under sustained small arms and heavy machinegun fire on the western side of the Tigris river.

The US forces hit back with heavy machineguns and lit up the evening sky with red and green flares to direct their fire before calling in helicopter gunships.

The shooting subsided after about 45 minutes, he said.

"They were firing from in and around a crowd. Friendly forces returned fire and the result was four or five enemy killed," US Staff Sergeant Gregg Sanders said.

It was not immediately clear who launched the attack but Army units had received reports from civilians earlier on Monday that paramilitaries loyal to Saddam Hussein were preparing an attack on the toppled president's 66th

birthday.

Murray said it appeared to be the heaviest fighting since US soldiers established control in Mosul, Iraq's third largest city, more than two weeks ago.

US administrators said they were beefing up military patrols in Baghdad to increase security in the chaotic capital.

In Baghdad, US Major General Glenn Webster told reporters: "In the next two weeks an additional three to four thousand soldiers will move in to protect the city."

The announcement came as Jay Garner, the retired US general in charge of the country, began talks with dozens of Iraqi officials in Baghdad after delegates at a political conference held Monday said security was a top priority.

Speaking at a press conference with Garner before the meeting, Webster said, "We have over 12,000 soldiers serving now but as you know better than me, this is a large and bustling city and 12,000 soldiers can be easily lost in a city this size."

He said US troops would be making patrols of the capital, which continues to be plagued by sporadic violence and looting three weeks after Saddam was toppled, and insisted the US-led coalition was the sole power in Iraq.

Garner stressed that his team would be focussing on security and basic services, and asked for help from the population to weed out those trying to stake a claim to control following the seizure by coalition troops on Sunday of a former exile who proclaimed himself governor of Baghdad.

Garner on Monday hosted a meeting of around 250 Iraqis from across the political spectrum and pledged to bring democracy to the country.

Delegates agreed to hold a conference within a month that would create an Iraqi interim government to take over power when the United States pulls out.

Bush vowed Monday to see Iraq through to democracy and said that the US-led occupation was already improving the lives of Saddam Hussein's former subjects "hour by hour".

"Iraq can be an example of peace and prosperity and freedom to the

entire Middle East," he told a cheering crowd in Dearborn, Michigan, home of a large Arab-American community.

"It'll be a hard journey, but every step of the way, Iraq will have a steady friend in the American people," he said, adding that the United States "has no intention of imposing our form of government or our culture" but will ensure that Iraq's new government "will protect the rights of all."

The US military also announced that Washington had moved its combined air command centre from Saudi Arabia to Qatar on Monday.

The announcement came as US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld flew into the former headquarters at Prince Sultan airbase outside Riyadh to meet troops and Saudi leaders.

The visit to a key Gulf ally came after Rumsfeld announced in Qatar on Monday that the United States would reduce its military forces in the Gulf now Iraq no longer posed a threat to the region.

In London, top international experts in Mesopotamian antiquities were to meet to discuss ways to save Iraq's cultural heritage following the looting of the country's museums as the Iraqi war ended.

US forces have come under strong criticism for failing to prevent the looting of treasures of one of the birthplaces of civilisation, notably from the Baghdad archaeological museum.

## Volvo buses

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that despite the high cost, the government should go for more Volvo buses because of the "safety and durability factors". These buses are supposed to remain operational for 20 years without any major problem.

BRTC officials said many spare parts of Volvo buses could be manufactured locally at the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory at Joydevpur at half the cost of imported ones.

Meanwhile, the BRTC workshop at Joydevpur has been equipped with modern facilities for better maintenance of buses.

## Zero duty

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we also discussed problems relating to the enclaves between the two countries."

Asked about repeated push-in bids by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and incidents of firing on and killing of Bangladeshis in the bordering villages, the Indian foreign secretary referred to the ongoing talks at the highest level between the BSF and the Bangladesh Rifles in Dhaka. "I hope this irritant will be removed," he added.

On the alleged illegal Bangladeshi migrants in India, Sibal said both sides have been sensitive to this issue, which needs to be resolved on a long-term basis.

Evading a direct reply on transit facilities through Bangladesh, Sibal said more visits by the people of the two countries would further cement the good neighbourly relations.

He said discussions were held for early introduction of Dhaka-Agartala bus service and establishment of rail link from Kolkata up to the Bangabandhu Bridge.

The Indian foreign secretary said there has been no discussion on Bangladesh's natural gas during the meeting.

Sibal said India would work jointly with Bangladesh on storm management and assist Bangladesh in the field of information technology. He divulged that two schools would be selected from each of the 64 districts in Bangladesh and all these schools would be provided with five computers each. Besides, 250 schoolteachers would be trained on IT.

Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury later informed journalists that the next round of foreign secretary-level talks between Bangladesh and India would be held sometime early next year in New Delhi.

# SARS strategy

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unabated in the country at the epicenter of the SARS scourge.

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, speaking to reporters at a summit of Asian leaders, said he was confident the virus could be controlled eventually.

"There is a need for us to recognize the fact that the SARS epidemic is going to be a long-term, a complex, and relapsing epidemic," Wen said.

"We have learned our lesson. The Chinese government and the people have learned a lot," he said, adding that reporting of cases had improved and the World Health Organization (news - web sites) was welcome to send teams to any hospital in China.

Asian leaders adopted a six-point plan to control the SARS outbreaks, which have killed more than 350 people and infected 5,500 in nearly 30 countries. It included rigorous screenings of international travelers, a SARS hotline, exchange of research and a call for transparency about the disease.

Leaders of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), along with China and Hong Kong, were encouraged that the WHO thought the virus, which has no cure as yet, was already peaking in Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Canada.

But with the disease still on the rise in China, ASEAN was keen to get Wen's support for the plan, including pre-departure and arrival checks at airports and ports across the region.

ASEAN groups Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Brunei.

China has reported a total of 148 SARS deaths and more than 3,300 cases since SARS first appeared in southern Guangdong province in November. Health experts suspect the actual tally in China could be far higher.

Hong Kong reported 12 new SARS deaths but only 15 fresh cases on yesterday -- a notable decline from the 20-40 cases a day the territory had been reporting. Hong Kong has been the second-worst affected country after China.

China said it was shutting down its stock exchanges from May 1 to 9, after earlier closing down nightclubs and theaters in the capital to prevent the spread of the disease.

WHO has slapped travel advisories on Beijing and other parts of China, as well as Hong Kong and Toronto.

Taiwan has closed its borders to visitors from China, Hong Kong, Canada and Singapore for two weeks and is quarantining residents returning from those places, the only country to take those kinds of measures so far.

Taiwan's cabinet approved a US\$1.43 billion fund to combat SARS, giving financial markets a shot in the arm on Tuesday, but analysts said more was needed to cure the island's economic ills.

Other Asian stock markets scored their biggest gains since the run-up to the Iraq (news - web sites) war, as battered airline shares surged on hopes the SARS outbreak had peaked.

But Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (news - web sites), said it was too early to declare victory in Vietnam, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada.

"Because this is an epidemic that we're still in the evolution of it and it really could be unpredictable," Fauci said in a CNBC interview. "Clearly China still has things out of control. It's a very serious situation in China."

WHO's director of Communicable Diseases David Heymann told reporters at the summit SARS could become permanently entrenched. "The risk of the spread of this disease becoming endemic in humans is still very great," he said, adding that would become clear in six months to a year.

# Ex-oil minister

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work of UN inspection teams and was considered an expert on Iraq's UN-supervised disarmament.

He had been involved in meetings with UN arms inspectors as early as 1992, fronting the technical talks on the Iraqi side with the UN's Rolf Ekeus at a time when the country was denying possessing a biological warfare programme.

Former British UN weapons expert Tim Trevan relates in his book 'Saddam's Secrets: The hunt for Iraq's hidden weapons' that it was Rashid who related how he personally had put out the president's order to destroy all documents about past weapons programmes in 1991.

Trevan describes Amer, whom he met repeatedly, as surprisingly tall and thin but not without a certain "roguish charm".

Rashid's surrender came after Centcom announced Sunday the head of the Iraqi body that liaised with UN arms inspectors had been captured.

General Hossam Mohammad Amin, former head of Iraq's National Monitoring Directorate (NMD), was number 49 on the US most wanted list and six of clubs.

He was one of two key interlocutors -- along with then presidential scientific adviser Amer al-Saadi -- of UN disarmament chiefs Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei in the months that preceded the US-led war.

He and Saadi became household faces for millions of television viewers around the world as they rebutted the multitude of US charges about Iraq's alleged banned weapons that sparked the war.

Saadi was still insisting that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction when he surrendered to US forces on April 12, just three days after they seized Baghdad and put an end to Saddam's 24-year rule.

"I expect to be questioned, to be interrogated about the Iraqi armament programme," said Saadi, a rocket specialist and Saddam's chief weapons adviser.

"I tell you for history we have nothing, not to defend the regime," he said.

But neither Amin's and Saadi's protestations of innocence, nor what Amin once called Baghdad's "proactive cooperation" with arms inspectors who resumed work in Iraq last November after a four-year break, could stop the war.

All three men are crucial in Washington's hunt for the elusive "smoking gun".

US officials also hope the 14 wanted officials who have either turned themselves in or been captured -- including former deputy prime minister Tareq Aziz -- will help lead them to Saddam, whose whereabouts remain a mystery.

# Teesta talks

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to a communication from Minister for Water Resources LK Siddiqui to his Indian counterpart recently for an immediate meeting of the JRC.

The JCE headed by the water resource secretaries of the two countries has been working for the last six years to find out ways of permanent or long-term sharing of water of seven major rivers -- Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar, Monu, Khowai, Gumti and Muhuri.

"We are optimistic about resolving the issue bilaterally, but the Indian side is not on the right track and is not taking into consideration the inconveniences of Bangladesh," said a top policy-maker of the government seeking anonymity.

Bangladesh wants an immediate agreement to get its due share of the Teesta water as the river's water flow during lean period (November to May) declined to 300 to 400 cusecs from 5000 cusecs in the last few years.

But no tangible progress in this regard could be made due to 'partisan attitude of the neighbouring country', he said.

Bangladesh officials said that since the inception of the JCE in 1997 to resolve the issue of water sharing of all the common rivers, no substantial progress has been achieved due to partisan attitude of the neighbouring country.

At the fifth meeting of the JCE in Dhaka last year, Bangladesh firmly wanted an immediate agreement on the Teesta water as per the provision of Ganges Water Sharing Treaty. But India took a 'clever stand' saying that before reaching such an agreement, it needs a five-year scientific study to examine the water flow of the Teesta.

The OC of the Kotwali Police Station said on-duty police constables were present when the incident took place, but no police officer was present there.

State Minister for Finance Abul Hossain was travelling by the same steamer from Dhaka to Barisal.

The local BIWTC trade union leaders took a 'clever stand' saying that before such an agreement, it needs a five-year scientific study to examine the water flow of the Teesta.

The incident delayed the PS Turn's journey to Khulna from Barisal by more than 90 minutes.

## Dhaka-Paris

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"Besides, Bangladesh has 8.1 per cent of foreign trade volume with France."

The government has stopped short of calling the French minister a liar through Monday's statement, says Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

"The French minister told reporters that he was scheduled to meet with the Khaleda Sunday afternoon, but the government says there was no schedule," Saber said.

Humiliation of a minister from a foreign country is unprecedented in Bangladesh, said Saber.

"Humiliation of foreign guests is becoming common during the alliance rule," Saber said recalling the recent unceremonious departure of the foreign minister of Myanmar from Bangladesh.

"Our prime minister was so busy that she could not give even half an hour's time to the French minister, while she talked to former Indian prime minister IK Gujral and outgoing Japanese ambassador," Saber said.

## 4 of a family

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killed by lightning in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Four members of a family were killed and four others injured by lightning in Bakerganj and Barisal Sadar upazilas on Monday night.

The dead were identified as Paribanu, 38, her two sons Siddique, 20, and Safikul, 2 -- and her mother Hayati Begum, 58.

They were struck by lightning while having meal at their house at village Bisharikhati in Bakerganj upazila at around 10 pm.

Four other people were also injured by lightning at village Chandramohan under Barisal Sadar upazila the same night.

Of them, seriously injured Siddikur Rahman was admitted to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.



**Instrumental music**  
Ostad Ayet Ali Khan Sangeet Niketon organises a session of classical instrumental music marking the seventh death anniversary of Ostad Abed Hossain Khan. Venue: Goethe Institut, Dhanmondi. Time: 7:30pm.

**Child gathering**  
Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum organises a child gathering and cultural programme in observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Child Labour with Women and Children Affairs Minister Begum Khurshida Jahan Haque as chief guest. Venue: Institution of Engineers' auditorium, Ramna. Time: 10.00am.

**Film show**  
Academy Film Society will screen an American film titled 'Under Fire'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

**Film festival**  
Pharmacy department of the University of Asia Pacific organises a five-day long film festival to help old and disabled people. Venue: University auditorium, Dhanmondi.

**Founding anniversary**  
On the occasion of the third founding anniversary of Palli Daridra Bimochon Foundation (PDBF), a seminar on 'Microfinance Programme in Bangladesh-A case of PDBF' will be held. Venue: LGED seminar room, Agargaon. Time: 9.00am.

**Workshop**  
National Institute for Local Government (NILG) organises a workshop titled 'Training method for UP chairmen, members and secretaries and the formulation of curriculum' with LGED and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: LGED auditorium, Agargaon. Time: 10.00am.

**Seminar**  
Dhaka Ahsania Mission organises a seminar titled 'The role of continuing education materials on women's empowerment' with Women and Children Affairs Minister Begum Khurshid Jahan Haque as chief guest. Venue: Dhaka Ahsania Mission auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 3.00pm.

**Monthly meeting**  
Monthly general meeting of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Seminar room of the society, Old Secretariat Road. Time: 5.00pm.

**Opening ceremony**  
The opening ceremony of Export Air Cargo Scanning Operation will be held with State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin as chief guest. Venue: Cargo Village, Zia International Airport. Time: 10.30am.

**Roundtable**  
A roundtable on 'Potentials and possibilities of participation of Bangladeshi workers in reconstruction works in Iraq' will be held with State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11.30am.

**Get-together**  
A get-together of Bangladesh-China People's Friendship Association will be held. Venue: Hotel Purboni International, Motijheel. Time: 4.30pm

**DHAKA TOMORROW**

**DUI discussion**  
Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) organises a discussion on the occasion of historic May Day. Venue: DUJ office