

Evidence of WMDs was 'big bluff'

AFF, Berlin

A German member of the UN team investigating Iraq's alleged programme of weapons of mass destruction has accused US authorities of presenting false evidence against the regime, the German weekly news magazine Der Spiegel reports in its yesterday's edition.

His criticism adds to a growing tide of accusations that the United States and its key ally Britain deliberately manipulated information to make it look as if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

The fear that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had such arms at his disposal was one of the chief justifications for the war to topple him.

The German inspector, Peter Franck, was part of the UN weapons inspection team in Iraq from December last year until shortly before the US-led invasion in March.

He told Der Spiegel that US Secretary of State Colin Powell did not present truthful evidence to the UN Security Council in a famous February 5 speech.

It was "all a big bluff," Franck said.

"Basically, it was all a show for the American public.

He said Powell used satellite pictures to try to show that decontamination trucks in front of an ammunition bunker were proof that Iraq was experimenting with chemical weapons there.

However, an earlier visit by UN inspectors had already determined

that the trucks were firefighting vehicles.

"What Powell said simply wasn't true," Franck told the magazine.

The United States and Britain should admit they lied when claiming the ousted Baghdad regime had weapons of mass destruction, Scott Ritter, a former UN senior weapons inspector in Iraq, said in an interview published in Geneva yesterday.

Ritter, speaking to the Swiss daily Le Temps, called on US President George W Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to "have the courage to be held responsible" for telling lies to the public into backing the conflict.

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Thousands of kids from different schools and their guardians attended the festival and made models of aircraft, rocket, pyramid, dome, star finders, planet finders and so on.

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The Bangladesh Astronomical Association (BAA) and the National Science and Technology

Museum jointly organised the festival to create interest among children about astronomy, astrophysics and space science.

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Orchi, a play group student of Dhaka Preparatory School, was trying to make a dome and said she would wear it like a cap.

Sayonto, a class one student of YWCA, said, "It is very interesting to make models with paper cut-outs."

The boy said he knew nothing about great scientists but he would like to become one.



PHOTO: STAR

SPACE FANTASY: A girl holds a paper-made model of a space shuttle at a science festival co-organised by the Bangladesh Astronomical Association and the National Science and Technology Museum at Agargaon in Dhaka yesterday.

Kids on space odyssey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Arifur Rahman Chowdhury, a class seven student of Badsha Faisal Institute, said he did not know whether the plane that he was making would fly.

Mashurul Amin, president of BAA, said they arranged the festival to attract children towards science. "To spread knowledge of science, we were planning to arrange such festivals outside Dhaka also. But we could not implement the plan owing to fund constraints."

"If we get sponsors we are ready to arrange the festival in the districts," he added.

Three Mongla Port guards suspended for theft of ship machinery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Mongla Port Authority (MPA) has suspended three of its five security guards on charge of pilfering machine parts of an abandoned Rumanian vessel that they were assigned to protect from damage and pilferage.

The abandoned vessel MV Ardeal, which has been lying at the port's outer anchorage, also developed cracks in the hull due to removal of the machinery, but was somehow prevented from sinking, an MPA official said.

Guards Nazrul Islam, Manu Mia, Amanat Molla, Bellal Hossain and Shahadat Hossain allegedly sold the machine parts after taking them apart from the engine room, said the official without specifying which three were suspended.

On April 1, 1999, the Rumanian flag vessel reached Mongla Port with a consignment of imported Indian rice, but the unloading operation was suspended after the Food Department declared two-thirds of the rice unfit for human consumption.

MV Ardeal, whose crew left the country after the vessel was declared abandoned in December, 2000, legally became the property of Mongla Port Authority.

BDR pushes back seven Indians

BSS, Dinajpur

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday pushed back seven Bangla-speaking Indians through the Hakimpur frontier, foiling a three-hour push-in bid by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

BDR sources said a BSF team from Agra border outpost pushed the seven Indians including four women and two babies through a place between sub-pillar 55 and 56 of the main pillar 288 adjacent to Ghashuria here during Juma prayers.

The seven push-in victims were apprehended and pushed back into India by a patrol team of BDR battalion-15 at about 3:30pm.

Interrogation of the victims revealed they are residents of Noksali Bari thana under Shiliguri district in the West Bengal State of India and were brought to the Agra BSF camp to be pushed into Bangladesh.

Earlier on Monday, BDR thwarted a BSF bid to push 12 Bangla-speaking Indians of a family into Bangladesh territory at Chhribandar frontier here.

Cops edgy

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bers of the force. Who will go to die fully knowing that the criminals will walk away as freemen with the blessing of certain quarters," he said.

The police casualties, however, pale beside civilian victims of the crime wave raging currently.

A spate of killings, robberies, bank heists and lynching all around has robbed my peace, said a housewife. "I even fear to take the children to school," she said.

A small shopkeeper also echoed the same voice. "We are living in a law and order nightmare. When the police are getting killed every day, imagine what will happen to us," asked Mohammad Alam.

"It appears that the whole nation is hostage to the hoodlums. Imagine, they extort money, even from me who earns from hands to mouth," he added.

Inspector General of Police Shahudul Haque, however, refused to make any comment on the issue.

Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch Farook Ahmed said police identified all the criminals involved in the killing of their colleagues.

"We're continuing the manhunt for the criminals," he said.

35 hurt in B'baria bus collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 35 people were injured, 15 of them seriously, in a road accident at Mirhati in Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila yesterday.

According to police and witnesses, the accident occurred when an Ashuganj-bound passenger bus from Brahmanbaria collided head-on with another bus coming from opposite direction at noon, leaving 35 passengers of both the vehicles injured.

The seriously injured passengers are Kamal Mia, 25, Shuva, 5, Jahirul Islam Khan, 38, Shagor, 5, Shireen Begum, 10, Ismail Bhuiyan, 28, Dipu, 22, Karim, 7, Rokeya Begum, 50, Salma Begum, 20, Dipu, 20, Jabbar Mia, 35, Rifat, 4, Arafat, 6, and Al Amin, 25.

They were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital while the rest given first aid.

Drivers and helpers of the buses fled the scene soon after the accident.

54 rescued while being trafficked to India

UNB, Benapole

BDR personnel here on Thursday night rescued 54 people while they were being trafficked to India.

BDR sources said they raided Sadipur village and rescued 15 men, 19 women and 20 children. They, however, could not arrest any trafficker.

The rescued people were later handed over to Benapole police.

Clash leaves 50 injured in Habiganj

UNB, Habiganj

At least 50 people were injured, three of them seriously, in a clash between two rival groups at Katkhali village in Baniachang upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said the trouble erupted at about 4pm when the supporters of Shahid Mia and Safar Ali clashed over playing football on a land adjacent to a graveyard.

During the hour-long clash, both sides used lethal weapons.

Of the injured, Safar Ali, Samaruddin and Amirul Islam were admitted to Sylhet Medical College Hospital and 14 others to Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

30 hurt as villagers clash in Gopalganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

At least 30 people were injured, 10 of them seriously, in a clash between two rival groups of villagers at Bedgram village in Gopalganj sadar upazila yesterday.

Sources said the incident that started out as a scuffle between two groups of children over picking dates soon turned into a full-blown clash as their parents and guardians also became embroiled in the fight.

Ten of the seriously injured people were admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital. They are Shaukat Sheikh, 48, Mamun, 19, Sabuj, 22, Milon, 15, Solaiman Sheikh, 70, Kamrul, 35, Shiraj, 30, Liton, 28, Azim, 38, and Faraj, 32.

A case was filed with Gopalganj police station.

Housewife gangraped, killed in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Shabita Rani Howlader, 24, wife of fish farm owner Pijush Kanti Howlader, was gangraped and killed by a gang of miscreants in the early hours of Thursday at Baharbania village under Morrelganj thana of Bagerhat district.

According to FIR lodged in the evening, a gang of eight entered the house breaking open the door at around 3.30 am. They tied up Pijush, raped Shabita and then strangled her.

Police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Shabita's elder brother Liton filed a murder case with Morrelganj thana. He also filed a petition seeking security of his life.

A procession was brought out at Baharbania village yesterday protesting the killing. Villagers demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

Five go missing as coaster sinks in Sandwip channel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, ctg.

At least five persons went missing when a sea coaster loaded with cement clinker sank at the Sandwip channel after being hit by storm on Thursday evening, port and police sources said.

The coaster, MV Evana, set out from the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port at 10.30am towards Dhaka with 15 crews including the Sareng on board.

It was caught in the storm at around 7:00pm and sank in the Sandwip channel, police source said.

Ten of the crews swam ashore while the rest five went missing. Police said a search was for the missing persons.

Chemical Ali

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But US Central Command and officials at the Pentagon said his status now was considered uncertain.

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said he did not know whether Majid is dead or alive.

"They attacked locations where they believed him to be. There was some speculation afterward that they thought that he had been killed. Now there's some speculation that he may be alive," Rumsfeld told reporters after meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

Majid is listed as No. 5 on Central Command's list of top-55 wanted Iraqis from Saddam's government, and is designated as the "king of spades" in the deck of cards given US soldiers to familiarise them with Iraqi fugitives.

Majid earned his moniker for ordering a chemical weapon attack against 5,000 Kurds in the Iraqi village of Halabja in 1988 to end decades of insurrection. At the time, Iraq was a US ally.

As police work as per the government directives, they suggested formation of a police board to which the policemen would be accountable. The speakers emphasised the need for developing close working relations between police and the magistracy, partnership between police and public and accountability to the people of all other government functionaries to improve the law and order.

They also stressed the need for increasing salaries and other facilities so that policemen could lead a better life. Provision for some allowance to meet office costs at police stations was also suggested.

Inspector General of Police Shahudul Haque said, "We could not engage an adequate number of police to prevent crime and maintain law and order since a majority of them remain engaged in checking political violence."

The IGP said firearms are smuggled into Bangladesh and it is an organised crime. "We must bring the gang members to justice to curb this

Phone gangs scare

FROM PAGE 1

Members of the Rapid Action Team (RAT) arrested 38 such criminals in the last three months across the city following complaints. Many such complaints were also made to various police stations. But most of the complaints are not on record as the complainants did not file any general diary.

RAT arrested 11 members of a gang who phoned a man using the name of Kala Jahangir and demanded toll. All of them were arrested about a month back.

Being scared of the criminals, many people paid them toll and did not inform the matter to police, sources said.

A police official said these criminals first demand a huge amount of money and in many cases settle for Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000.

On May 27, officials and employees of an insurance company caught a youth when he went to their office to collect Tk 50,000. Earlier, a man identifying himself as Kala Jahangir telephoned the managing director of the company, asking him to pay the money. Otherwise, he would be killed or his children would be abducted, the caller warned.

The youth was turned over to Motijheel police and a case was filed under the Speedy Trial Act. But anonymous callers are now threatening the managing director and the plaintiff in the case with death.

In another incident recently, a youth telephoned an official of the Bangladesh Shilpa Bank and demanded Tk 50,000 from him. The caller warned him of grave consequences if he did not pay the money.

In the same way, Tk 2 lakh was demanded from a journalist of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha recently, and a general diary was filed with Kafrul police on

Wednesday.

Locals in Monipur area alleged that some youths, claiming themselves as men of Kala Jahangir, abducted a businessman for not paying them toll. He was however released on condition that he would not contact police.

On Sunday, police nabbed a young man, Saiful Islam, from Azampur area when he went to collect toll using the name of Subrata Bain. In a similar incident on the same day, two youths -- Jasim and Mohammad Faruq -- were caught from Panthapath.

Lake grabbing

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Professor Mahbulul Haque, a local resident, said influential people are planning to pollute environment around the graveyard by developing a permanent kitchen market.

Abu Naser Khan, secretary general of BAPA, urged the local people to unite against the grabbers and keep protesting.

He pointed out that it was a gross violation of environmental law and asked the DCC to act against it.

3 firemen

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The bodies of the firemen were taken to the Fire Brigade Headquarters and sent back home yesterday evening.

Mohammadpur police seized the van, but the driver fled. A case was filed with Mohammadpur Police Station.

Archaic police laws

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necessary. An inadequate people-police ratio and use of sophisticated arms by criminals as against outdated ones by police are also causes behind the slide in law and order. The existing number of police personnel is 109,533.

As police work as per the government directives, they suggested formation of a police board to which the policemen would be accountable. The speakers emphasised the need for developing close working relations between police and the magistracy, partnership between police and public and accountability to the people of all other government functionaries to improve the law and order.

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Chechnya

FROM PAGE 12

Interfax. "Eleven bodies were recovered from the debris: nine children and two women," the spokesman said.

The toll had earlier been given as eight children, one man and two women.

The blast went off at 3:20 am local time, destroying several apartments. Rescue workers said about 15 people lived in the damaged apartments.

Initial reports of the blast raised fears of another rebel attack, as the war-torn republic has recently been rocked by a number of deadly explosions caused by separatist suicide bombers.

Last month, two suicide attacks within the space of three days killed 78 people in the republic.

On Thursday, 19 people were killed just outside Chechnya when a bus carrying Russian air force personnel was targeted by a female suicide bomber.

The woman also died in the blast in the southern Russian republic of North Ossetia, near the border with Chechnya.

Historic June 7

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which includes hoisting of national and party flags atop the party office in the morning, placing of wreath at the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum and a discussion meeting at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

AL President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in a message on the eve of the day said June 7 was a milestone in the history of the independence movement.

DHAKA TODAY

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen an American film titled 'Big Daddy'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Cultural function

A visiting cultural delegation of Vietnam will perform traditional song and dance of their country on the occasion of 30 years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Vietnam. Venue: National Museum, Shahbagh. Time: 7.00pm.

Convocation

The seventh convocation of Independent University of Bangladesh will be held with President Iajuddin Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Sher-e-Banglanagar. Time: 10.00am.

Discussion

A discussion on the 'Role of communication infrastructure in industrialisation, employment generation and urban and rural development' will be held with Communications Minister Nazmul Huda as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.

BMP discussion

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) organises a discussion on the 'Impact of family repression of women on health: Bangladesh perspective'. Venue: CIRDP auditorium. Time: 3.30pm.

CUP discussion

Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) organises a discussion on the 'rehabilitation of slum dwellers'. Venue: CUP office, Mohammadpur. Time: 11.00am.

Rotary Dhaka

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1.30pm.

Rotary Dhaka North West

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 5.30pm.

Human chain

Sylhet Division Development Action Council will form a human chain against violence. Venue: Muktangan. Time: 5.00pm.

Former Laxmipur BCL leader murdered

UNB, Laxmipur

Police recovered the body of a former general secretary of district Chhatra League from a hotel in the town here Thursday night and arrested three people in connection with the murder.

Abdus Shahid, also a first class contractor and son of Laxmipur pura commissioner Sujaytullah, went missing since Wednesday.

Police recovered his body from room no 124 of Unique Hotel and his motorbike from a nearby petrol pump at about 11:00 pm.

The arrestees are acting general secretary of district Awami League

and hotel owner ANM Fazlul Karim, hotel manager Habibullah Zahir and a boarder of the hotel, Syed Al Amin Mesbah.

Police suspect Shahid was strangled.

Police launched a vigorous search operation after the victim's wife filed a general diary with Sadar thana as Shahid did not return till Thursday morning.

Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mannan Howlader and Superintendent of Police Humayun Kabir visited the spot yesterday.

300 shanties gutted

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about 3pm, locals said. Mozammel Hossain, officer-in-charge of the Dhanmondi Police Station, said as soon as the fire broke out, it was announced over microphone from a nearby mosque. The police control room was informed of this immediately. Several fire fighting units from Palashi, Lalbagh and Mohammadpur stations and the fire service headquarters rushed to the spot in five minutes, he said.

But a section of slum dwellers, alleging that the fire fighters took about half an hour to reach the spot, attacked them and pelted brick bats. They also snatched some equipment from the fire service men and obstructed their operation, sources said.

Those injured in the clash were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Loss of property in the fire was being estimated.

A shopkeeper at the slum claimed Tk 60,000 in cash and goods worth over Tk 5 lakh were gutted at his shop.

Some women were found searching for their kids as they returned to the slum after the fire.

One of them, Noor Jahan, said her four-year-old son Mahin was missing.

Another woman, Ayesha, was searching for his 10-year-old brother.

"The cause of the fire is yet to be known and the damages caused are being estimated," said Mohammad Hurnuz Ali, an assistant director of the fire service.

Monsoon

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The wind is also wet. The monsoon will last till the end of September," Samarendra Karmakar, deputy-director of the met office said.