

## Iraq uranium from Niger 'US embassy in Rome was given forged documents'

AFP, Washington

The US embassy in Rome was given forged documents detailing alleged Iraqi attempts to acquire uranium from Niger from a private source last October, a senior State Department official said Thursday.

"In October 2002, we acquired these documents in Rome from a private source, a non-governmental source, and they were immediately shared with all the appropriate agencies," the official said.

"The embassy shared them with all the relevant agencies at post and they were then shared again when they got back to Washington," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

The official would not confirm reports in the Italian press that the documents had been given to the

embassy by a foreign journalist. Italy's leading newspaper Corriere della Serra said the journalist was "very probably Italian."

The FBI said Thursday it had opened an investigation into the origin of the false documents. "We do have an investigation. It's a pending matter," Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) spokesman Ed Cogswell said.

The documents, which the Italian newspaper La Repubblica has now published, were used by the State Department two months after they were obtained in a fact sheet pointing out omissions in Iraq's prewar declaration to the United Nations on its weapons programmes.

The Niger allegations then became part of the US campaign to convince the world community that Iraq was still pursuing a nuclear weapons programme, but were dropped after the CIA and other intelligence agencies in Washington cast doubt on their veracity.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency revealed publicly in March that the documents had been forged.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher admitted earlier this week that the inclusion of the Niger allegation in the December 19 fact sheet had been a mistake given the questions about the authenticity of the documents received by the Rome embassy.

On Thursday, Boucher declined to comment on the source of the documents or say where they had been turned over to the United States but confirmed that they had been obtained in October 2002.

## Flood

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The flooding brought lakhs of people to their knees in the northern districts. Some of them returned to their washed away houses with the recession of floodwaters and were passing their days without bare necessities.

"They don't have food, shelter and safe drinking water and medicine," an official in Pabna said.

Our Sirajganj correspondent adds: Some fresh areas in Taras and Royganj in Ullapara upazilas in the district went underwater yesterday.

The district administration said 75 unions, out of 83, and four municipal areas were submerged, affecting some 6,10,770 people and causing crop damage on 34,000 hectares.

Some 1,850 people shifted to 13 flood shelters opened by the district administration.

A spectre of starvation is also looming over the people in Aagbohali, Dharaborsha, Manika shoals of Sariakandi in Bogra and Shanbadhan Char, Char Giris, Char Nischintapur, Char Chongcha and Mircha shoals of Kazipur in Sirajganj and Kalagachi, Joyramaja, Isl, Iswarkul and Motukpur shoals of Rangpur.

Some 200 families in Motukpur in Gangachara upazila have been passing their days in utter misery.

They don't have food, drinking water and medicine, sources said.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: Rise in water level in the Meghna flooded vast areas in the district and in Bhola, marooning thousands of people, especially in the shoal areas.

The Joyonti, Sandhya, Sugandha and Tetulia rivers that criss-cross the Barisal region were flowing above danger marks.

The Bhola town protection dam was under threat of collapse.

Diarrhoea and gastrointestinal diseases were reported in flooded areas.

## Hectic lobby

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appoint Jabbar as the establishment secretary. Several ministers are also supporting him.

However, sources at the PMO said the prime minister has not yet made up her mind on the issue and might take a few more days to take the final decision.

## Amini

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vacant with the death of BNP lawmaker Nurul Amin Talukder.

The press conference elicited immediate reaction from the BNP policymakers, as the Prime Minister's Office asked the IOJ not to hold it.

A BNP policymaker said: "It's a clear breach of commitment and we cannot allow Amini to create troubles from within the alliance."

Although the prime minister did not announce the nomination of a common candidate from the alliance, Khadiza Amin, wife of late Nurul Amin, is likely to be fielded for the by-polls slated for August 21.

Amini on July 2 caused a stir by offering to resign from the Jatiya Sangsad in protest at the non-inclusion of his party representative in the cabinet, but backtracked on his decision after a meeting with Khaleda on July 8.



PHOTO: AFP

US soldiers block a highway in Baghdad as army explosives disposal team dismantles a bomb found along the side of the highway yesterday.

## Manpower

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Technology, physicians and nurses.

Both sides emphasised the need to halt illegal trafficking of people, especially women and children.

Other bilateral issues also came up for discussion in the meeting, which was held in a friendly atmosphere, said an official release.

Earlier in the morning, Ruddock, who arrived here Thursday night on a three-day official visit, placed wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar.

## Bus strike

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they would not allow any bus to ply the road until the 'killer' bus driver was punished.

Montu Khan, Secretary of the District Bus Workers Association, said they have decided to resort to strike in the face of threats and attacks by the tempo drivers and workers.

## AL to complain

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"The ruling coalition constituted the committees keeping the slots of the AL vacant. The constitution and the Rules of Procedure do not permit partial formation of the bodies," Shahid said.

"As the custodian of the House, the speaker should take initiatives to resolve the problem."

The gazette notification of the committees is likely to be published this week by the parliament secretariat, sources said.

Forty-five standing committees were formed in the last two sessions keeping the AL slots vacant.

## Administration

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board, file tracking, VoIP, digital library and Annual Development Programme (ADP) database, which could be accessed through the PMO and secretariat via radio link.

Several consultants will be appointed for implementation of the project, sources added.

Under the project, an alternate communication network will be set up. It will provide maximum reliability and security of communication and enhance speed and efficiency in decision-making and follow-up of compliance status.

The e-policing system will be established at five police stations in the capital for communication between citizens and police in all possible ways including online filing of general diary and first information report.

Digital divisional towns will provide electronic processing for major services, empower local representatives, introduce electronic forms of institution and kiosks to increase access of citizens to the digital content.

A 14-member project steering committee has been formed with the principal secretary to the prime minister as the convener and the project director will act as the member secretary.

Other members of the committee are secretaries of education, commerce, science and information communication technology, post and telecommunications, law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministries, executive director of Bangladesh Computer Council, presidents of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce, Bangladesh Computer Samity, Bangladesh ISP Association, Bangladesh Association for Software and Information Services and head of the department of computer engineering of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

The project will be implemented by 2005 with internal resources.

# Hasina: Poverty, injustice

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"When a population is subjected to repression and suffers, and the government of the day is unable or unwilling to extend protection, the principle of non-intervention should give way to the international community's responsibility to act and protect within multi-lateral settings," she said.

Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh's experience over the past two years amply demonstrated lack of good governance that a dysfunctional parliament, and for that matter democracy, yields.

Hasina alleged that despite the constitutional guarantee of basic rights and freedom, crimes are committed with impunity and even the media is not spared.

"In the absence of transparency and accountability, the nexus between crime and politics is assuming a dangerous institutional character," she observed.

# Grenades hit US military

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dominated body of planting the seeds of civil strife.

"Shame on those who consider Baghdad's fall a national holiday," said one banner raised by the demonstrators who converged on the Um al-Qura mosque on the western fringes of Baghdad from several Sunni mosques in the capital after Friday prayers.

The reference was to a decision by the Governing Council during its inaugural meeting on Sunday to declare April 9, the day US-led forces ousted Saddam Hussein, a national holiday in its first act as a ruling body.

"We (Sunnis) are the silent majority, not a minority," read another banner, while a third said "no to division into Sunnis and Shiites."

The 25-member council, supposed to reflect Iraq's ethnic and confessional makeup, has 13 Shiite members.

The protesters also chanted slogans against the US occupation, vowing to "exterminate the infidel (US) army."

"Revolt, revolt O Baghdad, let Bremer follow Nuri," they shouted, alluding to US civil administrator Paul Bremer and Nuri as-Said,

# Bush, Blair defend Iraq war

FROM PAGE 1

nuclear weapons program and I will remind the skeptics that in 1991 it became clear that Saddam Hussein was much closer to developing a nuclear weapon than anybody ever imagined."

"He (Saddam) was a threat. I take responsibility for dealing with that threat," Bush said, adding: "We won't be proven wrong... We will bring the information forward on the weapons when they find them and that'll end all this speculation."

In an impassioned defense of the war before a joint session of Congress, Blair said that toppling Saddam was justified even though weapons of mass destruction have failed to materialize.

"Can we be sure that terrorism and weapons of mass destruction will join together? Let us say one thing: If we are wrong we will have destroyed a threat that at its least is responsible for inhuman carnage and suffering," Blair said in what was billed as one of the most important foreign speeches of his six-year premiership.

"That is something I am confident history will forgive."

Blair and Bush are under fire for allegedly overstating the threat from Iraq's banned arms to justify

the former prime minister also alleged that corruption, extrajudicial killings and custodial deaths are now common in Bangladesh while the common man's access to justice is mostly denied.

Referring to the election process, the AL chief said it must be free, transparent and provide full opportunity for mass participation. "It must be above controversy so that the government can govern with confidence, courage and full legitimacy," she said.

"Equally, democracy must not be limited to its electoral aspect only," she added.

Hasina said although there are a large number of entities and bodies to protect, ensure and promote human rights, freedom, rule of law and democracy, the question is how effectively these organisations practise these values.

"Through dialogue, interaction

and sharing of experiences, we can consolidate and promote democratic institutions at home, and regionally and globally," she said.

The objective, she said, must be to bring every country and every citizen of the planet within the folds of democracy as societies with a democratic culture perform better than those lacking in it.

"We advocate globalisation of democracy and rule of law, such that the world, in due course, is transformed into a community of democracies," Hasina said.

Citing her experience, she said the struggle to achieve democracy and establish rule of law is a long and difficult one.

Hasina said, "...but for the sake of future generations, we have the opportunity to take concerted action and commit ourselves towards a future of peace and well being for the child of today and the one to be born tomorrow."

cil came against the backdrop of mounting attacks against US troops, chiefly in Sunni-populated areas of central Iraq believed to host loyalists of Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime.

## Ctg GPO official's house robbed in broad daylight

CU CORRESPONDENT

Robbers in broad daylight yesterday shot and wounded the assistant postmaster of Chittagong GPO (General Post Office) and looted Tk 50,000 worth of cash and gold ornaments from his house at Bahaddarhat in Chittagong yesterday.

Sources said a gang of four armed men stormed into the house of Assistant Postmaster Joyal Abedin Chowdhury right behind the Bahaddarhat post office at 3:30pm.

The masked robbers shot Chowdhury in the wrist and beat up his wife before fleeing the spot with the cash and ornaments.

No case was recorded till filing of this report.

The harsh criticism of the coun-

## Iraq urban warfare

# US mulls use of reserves

REUTERS, Washington

The Defence Department is considering calling up thousands of additional National Guard and Reserve troops in the coming months for service in Iraq, US defense officials said on Thursday.

The Pentagon said a total of about 201,000 National Guard and Reserve troops already are on active duty.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the use of additional National Guard and Reserve troops is in the mix of options now being weighed as the Pentagon devises a plan to bring long-serving troops home from Iraq and replace them with fresh ones while maintaining adequate troop levels.

Officials said elements of Army divisions in Texas and Hawaii, Marine Corps troops, and reservists are being considered for service in Iraq in the coming months. No final decision has been made, they said.

One official said the Pentagon was planning "for a variety of contingencies," but said the Army had "no definitive plans to call up any (National Guard) brigades and did not have any identified for possible call-up."

Among the part-time troops currently on active duty are about 137,000 in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, 32,000 in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, and 20,000 in the Marine Corps Reserve.

The United States has about 146,000 troops in Iraq, but has announced plans to bring home the entire 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) this fall, perhaps by September. About 15,000 soldiers in that division currently are in Iraq

## SSC grading

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subject -- objective, essay-type, theoretical and practical -- to pass a subject.

Any candidate with F grade in four subjects in SSC/Dakhil exams will be allowed to sit for those particular exams next year.

And students with F in three subjects in HSC/Alim will be considered to improve their grade next year.

If students want to sit for all examinations, they have to attend classes and examinations in school/college as regular students.

The ministry abolished a previous provision to allow examinees with F grade in one subject and GPA 1.5 and above to enrol in higher class on a temporary basis.

Talking to The Daily Star, State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque said, "From this year students failing in four subjects will be able to sit for improvement exams in those particular subjects."

The education ministry said schools, colleges and madrassas have to introduce the same grading into internal examinations.

The education boards will issue certificates to successful candidates with GPA ratings.

Examinees will be given transcripts, instead of mark sheets, with the GP secured in every subject and the GPA, the ministry said.

The GPA will calculate inclusion of fourth subject marks of SSC, HSC, Dakhil and Alim examinations from 2004. At present, the result does not reflect fourth subject marks.

The ministry decided to amend the system following a set of recommendations from educationists and experts.

and Kuwait.

The Pentagon is devising the rotation plan at a time when U.S. allies such as India have declined to provide thousands of peace-keeping troops as hoped by American officials.

Military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States have greatly increased the burden on America's part-time troops.

Central Command chief Gen. John Abizaid, who commands American forces in Iraq, said on Wednesday that troops being sent to Iraq could face yearlong deployments, a staple of the Vietnam War but used only rarely since then.

## India frees 2 Chinese POWs after 41 years

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian government has released two Chinese soldiers 41 years after they were captured during a bloody border war between India's prisoners of war.

The Asian diplomat said Yung Chialung, 61, and Sui Lang, 65, were handed over to Chinese officials July 8 at a state-owned psychiatric institution in the eastern city of Ranchi where they spent four decades as India's prisoners of war.

"The pair are already back in their homes in Sichuan province in southern China," the New Delhi-based diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

"Both India and China had agreed that the handover of the two will remain a secret," the official said.

## Bar Council

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would be affected by the 'irrational' and 'discriminatory' order of mandatory income tax return and demanded that the ceiling for taxable income be raised to minimum Tk 2,00,000 from the existing Tk 90,000.

He said non-confirmation of 15 judges of the Supreme Court represents a distinct 'government imprint of politicisation' on the judiciary and demanded that the judiciary along with the police administration be de-politicised.

"This is a matter of serious concern. By handpicking judges, the government is undermining the independence of judiciary. This will obstruct the rule of law, which is directly linked with judiciary's independence," Amir-ul-Islam said, adding that judges must be appointed on the basis of seniority, merit, performance and chief justice's recommendation.

He said the move to pass a bar council amendment law is an act of government interference in the activities of BBC in order to exert undue influence on the lawyers' organisation.

He predicted that amendment of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act without consulting lawyers would also create difficulties and fail to ensure justice.

At the outset of the press conference, BBC lawyers paid homage to late Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed and victims of the recent Chandpur launch capsizing.

# TV commercials

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ers, many of whom are children. Sexual or violent content can and does spark sexual or violent thoughts that are often translated into action.

Unfortunately, children are becoming more and more addicted to TV. Of course, there are worthwhile programs on TV suitable for kids, for example local programmes like Nofun Kuri or foreign programmes such as Sesame Street and the like. But these kids and adolescents are also bombarded with a procession of commercials replete with adult contents inserted between programmes. The effects of televised sex and violence on TV ad messages, which advertisers know have a broad appeal and therefore use unhesitatingly for promotion of their products, are anything but beneficial for our children. There is a growing amount of evidence that sexually explicit ad messages promote sexual callousness, cynical attitudes about love and marriage, and perceptions that promiscuity is the norm.

In fact, sexually explicit commercials are very much likely to have a disastrous effect on our future generation as well as the society they are going to live in.

## Tigers

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as a Test nation in 2000, when they were blasted out for under 100.

Skipper Steve Waugh won the toss and sent Bangladesh into bat on an easy-paced drop-in pitch and by lunch the tourists were reeling at 63 for six against Australia's formidable bowling quartet.

It was all over for Bangladesh 50 minutes after lunch with Mohammad Ashraful top-scoring with 23 off 52 balls and skipper Khaled Mahmud making 21 from 39 deliveries.