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The Daily Star

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Inside today

International

Bush not functioning as C-in-C



President Bush, though Commander-in-Chief of the US Armed Forces, is leaving the conduct of the Gulf war in the hands of commanders

Article

Only peace can bring hope

It is no coincidence that areas threatened by famine in Africa are the major areas of conflicts.

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Where the heart sways

Feature

Environment

The livelihood of 300 million people in Africa is being affected by a weed that is spreading among cereal crops.

Business

Soviet economy in peril

A former to Kremlin aide said the Soviet Union was heading first to economic catastrophe.

NEWS BRIEFS

Iraq closes border

RUWEISHED (Jordan), Jan 23: Iraq closed its border with Jordan on Wednesday, blocking the exodus of thousands of foreigners fleeing heavy allied bombing, evacuees said. Officials at this Jordanian border post said they had no direct word about the closure from the Iraqi side, but knew the border was shut because the stream of fleeing evacuees stopped suddenly during the night, reports AP.

Human shields

NICOSIA, Jan 23: Iraq said today it had moved a number of captured American airmen to strategic sites as human shields. A military communication, broadcast on Baghdad Radio, said a number of the pilots of the American enemy have been captured and distributed to strategic sites. It said Iraq had downed eight allied planes in the last two days, reports Reuters.

Iraqis expelled

LONDON, Jan 23: Britain today expelled 20 Iraqis in a bid to cut the risk of guerrilla attacks promised by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Officials at London's Heathrow airport said police with machineguns stood guard as the Iraqis were searched and put aboard a Jordanian airliner bound for Vienna and Amman.

Scanty field reports irk Bush

Basra, Faw bombed

NICOSIA, Jan 23: Allied aircraft launched successive bombing raids on the southern Iraqi ports of Basra and Faw today, the Iranian national news agency IRNA said, reports Agencies. IRNA said Iraqi anti-aircraft guns fired at the attacking planes and powerful explosions could be heard from the Iranian port of Khorramshahr, 10 km (25 miles) southeast of Basra. Five allied aircraft could be seen from Khorramshahr. The latest raids on Basra, heavily bombed on Tuesday, began at 1 p.m. (0930 GMT), it said. The agency had reported two other attacks during this morning.

IRNA said Faw, an oil port 80 km (50 miles) southeast of Basra which was occupied by Iranian forces in the latter stages of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, was also attacked by allied planes. French Jaguar fighter-bombers struck at Iraqi targets in Kuwait today, their fifth raid since the Gulf war broke out, Defence Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement said. Chevènement told the French radio station Europe-1 during a morning interview that the warplanes were attacking as he spoke. On Tuesday they attacked an Iraqi naval base near Kuwait city. All planes returned safely to base. The raid was carried out in coordination with US, British and Italian forces. Kuwaiti pilots today successfully attacked Iraqi strategic positions in the occupied emirate, Kuwait's news agency KUNA said. In a report monitored in Nicosia, the agency quoted exiled Defence Minister Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah as saying in Dahrhan, Saudi Arabia, that Kuwaiti planes carried out two sorties and returned safely to base. It gave no details about the raided targets. The Kuwaitis have mounted several sorties since a US-led multinational force launched its air offensive on Iraq a week ago.

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Tel Aviv hit hard by third Scud

Iraq crosses Saudi border

NICOSIA, Jan 23: Iranian television said Wednesday that Iraq claimed it launched a surprise attack Tuesday night across the Saudi-Kuwait border and occupied some Saudi territory, reports AP. The television, monitored in Nicosia, said that Baghdad's Voice of the Republic Radio reported that Allied forces retreated under heavy fire from artillery and helicopters. On the other front, Iraq launched third Scud missile attack on Tel Aviv Tuesday night killing at least three persons and injuring about 100.



House reduced to rubble by an Iraqi missile that struck Tel Aviv on Tuesday. —AFP photo

First ground attack
Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency reported earlier that Iraqi ground forces had launched first ground attack against Allied troops in Saudi Arabia early Wednesday morning.

An officer at the Allied headquarters in Riyadh said, "We don't have any indication that such an attack is going on or has happened."

Later, at Wednesday's regular military briefing in Riyadh, Lt Col Mike Scott said there had been continuing sporadic artillery fire and a regiment of the 3rd Armored Cavalry exchanged fire with an Iraqi patrol on Saudi territory. No US soldiers were wounded and six Iraqi soldiers were captured. The Americans were treated and returned to duty.

IRNA said it had confirmed reports from Iraq that Iraqi forces have occupied Saudi territory on the border and have captured a group of Allied soldiers near the Saudi-Kuwait border.

Bangladesh ambassador talks to Daily Star

Schools run by SAARC states in Saudi Arabia closed

Star Special

The ambassadors of South Asian countries in Saudi capital Riyadh jointly reviewed the war situation and decided to keep the schools of their respective countries closed until February 2. When contacted over telephone on Wednesday, Bangladesh Ambassador in Riyadh Kazi Golam Dastagir told The Daily Star that although everything was normal in the Saudi capital and other parts of the kingdom, people were little bit scared following Iraqi missile attack on Riyadh and Dahrhan. None of the missiles hit Saudi Arabia as all of them were destroyed by 'Patriot' missiles, he said. He however, said two pieces of a damaged Scud missile landed in Riyadh a few days back without causing any damage. Ambassador Dastagir said sirens cautioning people against missile attack by Iraq on Dahrhan was blown on Tuesday. But nothing happened according to our nationals who informed Riyadh mission. He said there are several

committees consisting of Bangladeshis in the vulnerable Eastern Province, who keep the mission in Riyadh informed about the latest situation. The Ambassador said the Bangladeshi nationals were safe. He further said the Saudi government responded quickly to the request by the ambassadors of the SAARC countries to provide protection to their nationals by saying that the expatriates would be treated at par with the Saudi nationals.

Indian troops in Kashmir put on full alert

NEW DELHI, Jan 23: Indian troops in the northern state of Kashmir were put on full alert after coming under unprovoked firing from the Pakistani army, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said today, reports AFP. Pakistani troops opened fire three days ago, apparently to help Indian Muslim separatist militants, infiltrate into Kashmir from the Pakistani-held part of the northern province, officials were quoted as saying.

PTI did not say if the firing in the frontier regions of Rajouri and Poonch was ongoing or whether Indian troops had fired back. The PTI report from Kashmir's winter capital, Jammu, said a soldier of the Indian army's military engineering service was wounded in the Pakistani firing but failed to say when.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of training and arming Muslim guerrillas campaigning to secede Kashmir. Indian's only Muslim majority province, Islamabad denies arming the guerrillas but has expressed diplomatic support for the campaign. PTI said the Pakistani firing was aimed at pinning down

Indian army soldiers in the area so that Kashmiri guerrillas, allegedly trained in Pakistan, could sneak into the troubled Indian state. The news agency quoted some arrested militants as saying nearly 3,000 Kashmiri rebels as well as several thousand Afghan Mujahideen guerrillas were in Pakistani-held Kashmir waiting to sneak into the Indian side. News reports here have previously linked Afghan rebels in Pakistan with the Kashmir militants, but there have been no confirmed reports of infiltration by Afghans.

People were deprived of food during AL rule, says Khaleda

By DU Correspondent

NATORE, Jan 23: BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia today lashed at the Awami League saying the people had rejected the party that came to power after independence, reports UNB. "People were deprived of food and clothing, and had no peace during the Awami League regime", she told a huge rally at Boraipara, 12 kilometres from here, on the second day of her election campaign.

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No alternative to Islamic rule, says Abbas

By Staff Correspondent

Jamaat-e-Islami Acting Ameer Abbas Ali Khan on Wednesday said establishment of Islamic rule in the country is an imperative for protecting people from all sorts of oppressions. The Jamaat leader was addressing a public meeting at Panchsibi of Joypurhat district. Presided over by a local leader Haji Afajuddin, the meeting was organised by upazila unit of the party as part of the election campaign. The acting Ameer said there was no alternative to 'rule of Allah' to salvage the people from the present situation. If voted to power, he said, his party would play a pioneering role in building up an exploitation-free society. He blamed all the past governments for failing to establish a democratic order in the country as desired by the people.

APSU threatens to gherao Ershad villa

By DU Correspondent

All-Party Students Unity (APSU) threatened to gherao the luxury villa in Gulshan where the ousted President H.M. Ershad detained unless he has shifted to central jail immediately. The APSU also decided to go on hunger strike if their demand was not fulfilled.

The decision was announced at a rally of the APSU at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. The rally was addressed by DUCSU General Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon, Chhatra League (S-A) General Secretary Ashim Kumar Ukil, Chhatra League (N-S) General Secretary Shafi Ahmed and Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Joint Convenor Fazlul Haque Milon. Khairul Kabir Khokon demanded the ousted president be immediately transferred to the Central Jail for trial on charges of killing. He demanded an explanation as to why Ershad was not shifted to the Central Jail. He called upon the Government to play more effective role in establishing democracy. Ashim Kumar Ukil said the Jatitya Party (JP) supporters were now creating anarchy and terrorism in the country by hiring 'mastans' with a huge amount of public money, they looted while in power.

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Hearing of writ against Moudud begins

By Supreme Court Correspondent

The writ petition in the nature of habeas corpus challenging the detention of former Vice-President Mr. Moudud Ahmed came up for hearing on Wednesday before a division Bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court comprising Mr. Justice Md. Abdul Jalil and Mr. Justice Qazi Shaheed.

The grounds of detention appear to be that there was apprehension of attempt on his life and public safety and public order were in danger. The facts leading to this conclusion were explained in the grounds.

Mr. Moudud is detained for 120 days by the impugned order on 24.10.90 with a view to preventing him from doing

BNP wants ex-ministers declared fugitives

A delegation of BNP called on Acting President Shahabuddin Ahmed on Wednesday and demanded that the former ministers of Ershad wanted by police be officially declared fugitives.

Shortly after the 90-minute meeting at the President's secretariat, BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar told UNB they stressed that none should be allowed to evade the law.

"We have told the Acting President how Ershad's ministers could evade warrants of arrest. They have neither surrendered nor taken bail from court", said Salam Talukdar, who led the three-member delegation.

BNP leaders Saifur Rahman and Dr. R. A. Ghani accompanied the delegation.

Law Reforms Commission dissolved

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Wednesday ordered the dissolution of the three-member Law Reforms Commission headed by Barrister Asrarul Hossain which was set up under a resolution of January 15 last year, a Press Note issued here yesterday said, reports BSS.

The terms of reference of the defunct commission were to examine and review such laws as specified by the government and suggest their reforms and amendments to propose amendment of laws

Advocates of present system want autocratic rule: Hasina

The Awami League chief, Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday said those who advocated the continuance of present administrative system in fact wanted to uphold the autocratic system, reports BSS. She was addressing spontaneous gatherings coming in processions to the Bangladesh Bhaban last afternoon carrying the Awami League election symbol-Bat from various parts of the city including Agargaon, Jigatala, Malibagh, Shahjahanpur, Azimpur, Narinda, Chawk Bazar, Nawabpur, Islampur, Siddeswari, Luxmibazar, Bangsal and Gendaria.

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5-party caught unawares: Future of GOJ uncertain

By Staff Correspondent

Five-party Alliance denied yesterday having anything about electoral understanding between Awami League and Ganatantrik Oikya Jote (GOJ). But competent source said the breakaway parties of the Eight-party Alliance who formed GOJ, have accepted Awami League's unilateral offer to accommodate nominees of smaller parties in 36 seats. The unilateral offer of 36 seats to Baksal, NAP, CPB, Ganatantri Party and Janata Mukti Party has made the future of GOJ uncertain. The partners of the Eight-party Alliance in GOJ did not respond to a request by Five-party Alliance to sit in a joint meeting yesterday to discuss the Awami League's unilateral offer. The Five-party source told The Daily Star that the meeting is likely to be held today (Thursday). But no confirmation of holding such a meeting was available from the Eight-party sources. According to Ganatantri Party source, the smaller parties of the Eight-party Alliance were meeting separately to review the situation. Informed sources, however, said except a few individuals who could not be accommodated, the Eight-party components have accepted the offer. Ahmedul Kabir, Syed Altaf Huseain and Ali Haider Khan of Ganatantri Party were very critical of the Awami League's move which came after Syed Altaf and Ahmedul Kabir withdrew from the race. Ali Haider Khan was not accommodated. Awami League has offered 14 seats to Baksal, nine to CPB, eight to NAP and four to Ganatantri Party and one to Jana Mukti Party. The two factions of Gana Azadi League were denied any seat. The Five-party Alliance held

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