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YOUR 20-PAGE WEEKEND PAPER



Singing the songs of freedom

While politicians bicker over petty issues, people's observance of Victory Day turns into a celebration of all that is great about Bangladesh. Colour, music, creativity and the spirit of youth combine on the streets of Dhaka as youthful citizens celebrate the 27th anniversary of victory in the 1971 War of Liberation.

Photo: Sheikh Enamul Haque

## Quit now, BNP tells CEC

By Staff Correspondent

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has said no fair elections can take place with the present CEC in office and the AL in power.

"Volunteer resignation immediately or we'll force you to quit," Mannan Bhuiyan told a gathering before the party's march towards the office of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mohammad Abu Hena yesterday.

He also demanded for replacement of the CEC with a Supreme Court judge, cancellation of by-polls results in Pabna-2 constituency, and a fresh by-election there.

The secretary general asked the Awami League government to announce a mid-term election to "test its popularity." "Only then will we sit for discussion to formulate policies on all national issues including

hartal," he said. The march started from the Muktangan ground adjacent to the GPO around noon and was stopped by police at Bangla Motor crossing, nearly half way from the Election Commission Secretariat at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. The DMP had earlier banned public gathering around the secretariat on the day. The marchers sat down on the street against a barbed wire fence with riot police nearby.

The BNP secretary general alleged that the 1996 general elections and the consecutive by-elections were not free and fair and blamed the CEC for failing to ensure fair elections.

"Cancellation of results of 51 centres in the Dhaka-10 seat proves that the general elections were not fair. We boycotted polls under the present CEC after by-polls in Laxmipur

and Mirsarharai were rigged but contested the Manikganj and Barisal by-polls after he assured of enforcing election code. Again, the CEC failed to maintain his neutrality in the following by-polls including that in Pabna."

Before concluding the march at 1.25 pm, city BNP chief Sadek Hossain Khoka said the AL government had no right to stay in power after it "failed to maintain law and order, check price spiral of essentials and resolve other problems."

"BNP chief Khaleda Zia will announce fresh agitation programmes after the month of Ramadan and has asked the party members to prepare for a greater movement to force the government step down," Khoka told the gathering at Bangla Motor.

## Blitz on Baghdad as US finds pretext to attack

Muslim and Arab states outraged by sudden raids

BAGHDAD, Iraq: The United States fired hundreds of missiles on Iraq Thursday in attacks that lasted through the night, and Baghdad shook with explosions and anti-aircraft gunfire. Two people were killed and 30 were injured, a doctor said, reports AP.

Russia and China called for an immediate halt to the attacks, but US officials suggested the strikes may continue.

Major Muslim and Arab organisations and other developing countries have reacted sharply to the air strikes on Iraq. Leaders of the Organisation

of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League heavily criticised the US attacks, as did India and Pakistan. Gulf states not known for their liking of Iraqi president Saddam Hussain such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, also voiced concern at the US attacks.

The Iraqi capital was calm during the day in contrast to the air raid sirens and anti-aircraft fire that punctuated the night.

Government employees went to their offices, and children headed to school. Morning traffic jams clogged some streets in downtown Baghdad, although

fewer cars were on the streets. Baghdad residents lined up at gas stations to stock up on fuel, a sign that more attacks were expected.

"We are expecting the worst of Clinton because we have discovered that he has no humanitarian principles," said Riad Mardouh al-Samarai, 36, as he stood at one station.

The strikes were met with defiance in Iraqi newspapers.

"Iraqis are pulling together to go forward to bury the strikes of aggression and continue their new crusade to teach the enemy lessons, which they will

never forget," al-Qadissiya, a government newspaper, said in an editorial.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein visited some sites targeted by US missiles Thursday, including his daughter's house. Baghdad Radio reported. She was safe, but the house was demolished.

"It was targeted and destroyed by the evil enemies in their latest aggression," the radio said.

US President Bill Clinton said he ordered the strikes on military and security targets to retaliate for Iraq's defiance of

the UN Special Commission, which is responsible for eliminating the country's weapons of mass destruction.

"Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to threaten his neighbors with nuclear weapons, poison gas or biological weapons," he said.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said he authorized the participation of British forces.

Saddam taunted the United States and Britain in his radio address, saying they are cowards for not fighting "face to face" but "depending on a long

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## West's jingoism splits UN coalition asunder

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 17: The airstrikes against Iraq have bitterly divided the UN Security Council, leaving it unable to decide on any course of action to resolve the conflict over weapons inspections, reports AP.

Iraq, Russia and China called Wednesday night for an immediate halt to the attacks. But the United States and Britain insisted military action was justified because Iraq had failed to cooperate fully with UN weapons inspectors.

The result was a formal Security Council meeting with 15 speeches, an outpouring of frustration that peace efforts had failed, but no action — and no timetable for future talks on the Iraqi crisis. The council is

scheduled to meet Thursday, but the agenda is Cyprus and the Western Sahara.

"I am certain the Security Council will be considering this issue in the coming days," said Russia's UN Ambassador Sergei Lavrov, who called for Wednesday night's formal meeting.

For UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, it was "a sad day for the United Nations and for the world."

Annan, who helped avert military action against Iraq in February and November, said he did everything in his power to seek peace and deeply regretted not being able to avert the use of force. He said his thoughts were with the Iraqi people, the 370 UN humanitarian

workers still in the country "and with all others whose lives are in danger."

He spent much of the day at the three closed council meetings and the open council session Wednesday night.

Only a month ago, the Security Council unanimously backed a resolution demanding that Iraq cooperate fully with weapons inspectors — as Baghdad promised Nov 14 when the United States and Britain called off threatened airstrikes.

But that unity started to fray when chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler reported to Annan on Tuesday that Iraq had not only failed to cooperate fully but imposed new restrictions on the inspectors' work. And it totally collapsed after

Butler pulled out the inspection teams from Baghdad on Wednesday morning without consulting the council — and the United States and Britain then launched airstrikes hours later without council approval.

During Wednesday night's meeting, there were serious divisions among the 15-member council over a cease-fire, the accuracy of Butler's report and his decision to evacuate inspection teams from Baghdad, and the unilateral use of force by the United States and Britain.

Some council members were also angered that the airstrikes were launched just as they were discussing three options suggested by Annan to deal with Butler's report, which became moot.

After 15 speeches from supporters and opponents of the military strikes, the council adjourned a formal meeting shortly before midnight without setting a timetable for further talks on the Iraqi crisis.

Speaking at the start of the meeting, Iraq's UN envoy Nizar Hamdoun urged the council to call for an immediate halt to the attacks, which he said were wrecking the lives of innocent Iraqis.

Russia's UN Ambassador Sergey Lavrov also appealed for an immediate end "to these acts of military force." China's UN envoy Qin Huasun called on the United States and Britain "to stop forthwith all military actions against Iraq."

## Russians find Monica last hope for peace

MOSCOW, Dec 17: Russian legislators agreed Thursday to consider a motion appealing to Monica Lewinsky to help halt the American attack on Iraq, reports AP.

The State Duma appeals to Ms Lewinsky to undertake corresponding measures to restrain the emotions of Bill Clinton," said the motion by nationalist lawmaker Alexander Filatov.

The motion was approved on a vote in the Duma, the lower chamber of parliament, to be considered for inclusion in a broader resolution denouncing the attack on Iraq.

The attack by the United States and Britain on Iraq was condemned by almost all major political groups in Russia. The Communists, the largest party in the Duma, also mentioned Clinton and his relationship with the former White House intern.

"Many people link it with Clinton's impeachment and his intimate relations with a certain person, but if these relations develop into such acts of vandalism, then all of US democracy is worth a penny." Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov told a Duma debate on the Iraqi crisis.

## India condemns, so does Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: India today condemned the missile attacks on Iraq by United States and Britain as members of parliament demanded an immediate halt to the military strike.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said in the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) that it was "particularly regrettable that this unilateral action has been taken at the very time when the UN Security Council is in session to discuss developments."

Vajpayee, who was making a statement in the house, said the attack on Iraq "raises serious questions regarding the functioning of the collective and consultative procedures of the Security Council."

"We call for an immediate halt to the military action and resumption of diplomatic efforts under the auspices of the UN," the Prime Minister said.

Meanwhile, a Reuters report from Islamabad said that Pakistan today denounced US air strikes on Iraq and called for an immediate halt to the confrontation and for urgent measures to find a peaceful solution of the issue.

## Sen waxes philosophical on health

By Staff Correspondent

RAJENDRAPUR, Gazipur, Dec 17: Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Sen today said health condition depends not only on health care services but also on a variety of economic and social conditions.

He was addressing the closing ceremony of "Global Health Equity Initiative Conference" here at BRAC centre for Development Management in the afternoon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the function as chief guest.

BRAC and ICDDR, B jointly organised the conference participated by representatives from across the globe. The closing ceremony was also aimed to felicitate Prof Amartya Sen who won the Nobel Prize in Economics this year.

Identifying three issues for bringing equity on world health, Prof Sen said these issues are very important and urgent to meet to achieve progress in health sector.

The issues are problem of the distinction between judging equity of health and equity in health care, how do we assess the health, and the issue of aggregation.

Citing example of deteriorating health condition in Russia, he said "that is connected to health care and general problem in economic and social condition."

"We would not think looking about efficiency in terms of how much health care is provided. We would try to look at efficiency in terms of what we achieved," the Nobel laureate

## Conceived here, but born over there!

By Staff Correspondent

Nobel laureate Prof Amartya Sen has said he was conceived in Bangladesh but born in Shantiniketan, in West Bengal.

He said that his parents went to his maternal uncle's house in Shantiniketan when his mother was in very advanced stage and he was born there.

Prof Sen said this while addressing the closing ceremony of "Global Health Equity Initiative Conference" here at BRAC centre for Development Management at Rajendrapur yesterday afternoon.

The Nobel laureate said his father's and grand father's permanent house was in Bangladesh and he studied in Dhaka's Saint Gregory School. He lived at the city's Larmini Street during his school days.

There is a big change between today's Dhaka and that in his childhood, he noted. He said Dhaka is now a very crowded city and he would not recommend anyone to live in this city, not even at posh Gulshan and Baridhara.



Thinking alike? : Amartya Sen with Sheikh Hasina yesterday

observed.

On assessment of health, Prof Sen said there are two perspectives of health — internal and external. The internal perspective is dealt by the anthropologists while external by the medical experts.

"There are some truth in both sides. It is not wise to deny the external perspective. It is necessary," he added.

He cited example that the people of Kerala are very conscious about their health while people in Bihar think that they would have to live within the existing situation.

On issue of aggregation, he said it is very critical to aggregate how much would be given in this sector and whether the healthy or sick people will get priority in allocation. He stressed the need for equity for both the groups.

"While you are judging between the human being you cannot make judgment only on medical condition without taking account of other kinds of advantages and disadvantages people suffer from," Prof Sen said.

To build a health system in a country, he said, both the rich and poor should have to be given equal health services. He said health system cannot develop if the poor do not get health care facility. "You need a shared service."

The function was also addressed by Prof Giovanni Berlinguer of University of Roma "La Sapienza", Director

of ICDDR, B Prof George Fuchs, Director of Health Services Division of Rockefeller Foundation in New York Dr Tim Evans and Executive Director of BRAC FH Abed.

State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Dr Mohammad Yunus and Prof Rahman Sobhan were present on the occasion.

UNB adds: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that to her government, development means human development and wellbeing which depend on the delivery of basic needs, like education, health and nutrition.

"We believe that development does not merely mean increase in income or production. Like Amartya Sen, we believe that we need a well-educated and healthy nation in order to make the best out of the market economy," she said.

Felicitating Nobel Laureate Prof Amartya Sen in the closing session of Global Health Equity Initiative conference at BRAC Centre for Development and Management Hasina said in development effort her government had given the highest priority to poverty alleviation and equitable growth.

The Prime Minister observed inequity or inequality between the rich and the poor, between rural and urban areas and among different regions is a great cause of concern in Bangladesh.

This inequity is present in almost all aspects of life — edu-

cation, health or income distribution — she said, adding that there is plenty of statistics to prove this asymmetry.

In Bangladesh, she said, the mortality and morbidity rates are much higher among the poor than the well-to-do. A recent survey found 72 per cent higher morbidity among the poor than the richer section of the community, she added.

Hasina said condition of women is much more unacceptable. Bangladesh is one of the three countries of the world where life expectancy of women stands below men's. "This is unfortunately true."

She said there is another dimension of this inequality in health and mentioned that studies had shown income erosion due to sudden serious illness as a major cause for the marginal group to plunge into poverty.

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## Sen to visit St Gregory on Saturday

By Staff Correspondent

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen visits St Gregory's High School at 9:30 am instead of 7:30 am tomorrow (Saturday). All Gregorians have been requested to assemble at the school by 9 am to receive the fellow Gregorian.

## Old comrades come together

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

These days they do not see eye to eye, thanks to today's politics. But they came, shook hands, hugged each other and spent hours together.

As other war heroes watched for find friends in each other at least for a few hours, the organisers were beaming in ecstasy.

"This was our target," said a visibly happy Masud Sadique, one of those who organised the Sector 2 get together on the Victory Day.

Today (Mofazzal Hossain) Maya and (Sadeq Hossain) Khoka are not friends. But they were together in those times fighting for a common cause."

"Why can't the freedom fighters be united or at least act as a unifying factor?" asked Sadique, fondly called Chullu Bhai, one of the members of the Crack Platoon that Jahanara Imam immortalised in her *Ektattur Dinguli* in vivid descriptions.

Chullu Bhai's question reverberated around the Queen's Garden community centre at

the city's Eskaton, that historic house which sheltered Dhaka freedom fighters along with their arms and ammunition.

Many remembered Shaheed Nizamuddin Azad, whose father risked his life for allowing the bichchus to use the Eskaton house.

The heroes came, with their families. Six hundred fifty cups of coffees helped the organisers guess how many came to the 11am-4pm event. Absolutely informal, no fiery speeches, no dias, no chief guest.

As the minister for education came, Khoka and Maya were there to greet him, in similar fashion.

Kazi Kamal Uddin, Bir Bikram, busy in his own ways, took care of the unattended. "Oh he was a great man, a brave fighter," he whispered as a former brigadier walked in silently with his family at the last moment.

Ministers and celebrities aside, there were former and serving generals, bureaucrats, businessmen and members of various professional groups.

Many of them had acts of gallantry written down in the books of history.

And there were many unsung.

"Oh, those were the days. You know I could get killed at least twice," recalled Dr M S A Mansur Ahmed, then a 2nd year medical student who led medical teams on several occasions behind the K-Force commander. "In Kasba, Devipur village..." a grasping Ahmed couldn't finish as there were so many stories to tell.

Standing quietly beside him was Major General Jamil Ahsan, now the GOC of Jessore area. Then a lieutenant, he led the company that did the Shal-dah river operation.

While the soft-spoken General Ahsan trekked back to those glorious days, Ahmedul Ameen looked around to see the turnout. "Almost everybody came. It's all word of mouth. No formal invitation," said Ameen whose Eskaton office was used as the informal headquarters for the organisers.