



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

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 foes 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 Bhuiyan, one of the members of the Crack Platoon that Jahanara Imam immortalised in her *Ektakor Dinguli* in vivid descriptions.

Chullu Bhuiyan'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 *bichhus* to use the Eskaton house.

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

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

While the soft-spoken General Ahsan trekked back to those glorious days, Ahmed 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.

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.

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 Organisa-

tion 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 Hussein 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 Mamoudah 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 authorised 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 in the coming days," said Russia's UN Ambassador Sergey 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 humanitar-

ian 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

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 Iraq 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."

Sen waxes philosophical on health

By Staff Correspondent



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 di 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 Md. Aliuzzaman Khan Alamgir, Dr Mohammad Yunus and Prof Rehman 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 The 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.