

Bush signs war resolution

US warns allies, Iraq, not to doubt its resolve

AFP, Washington

US President George W. Bush on Wednesday signed legislation authorising him to wage war on Iraq, warning Baghdad and reluctant US allies they would be "unwise to test" his resolve to disarm Saddam Hussein.

"Our goal is to fully and finally remove a real threat to world peace and to America. Hopefully, this can be done peacefully," the president said at a televised White House signing ceremony.

"If any doubt our nation's resolve, our determination, they would be unwise to test it," added Bush, surrounded in the ornate East Room by some 100 lawmakers of both parties and chambers of Congress.

White House aides have long hoped the resolution, which authorises Bush to launch unilateral US attacks should he decide diplomacy is a dead-end, will pressure a reluctant UN Security Council to more firmly confront Saddam.

Washington wants the council to adopt a US-British resolution creating a new weapons inspections regime and explicitly threatening military consequences if Saddam fails to comply.

But that plan has drawn opposition from permanent council members France and Russia - which, like the United States, Britain and China would veto.

In a thinly veiled warning to Paris and Moscow, the US president warned that chaos in the Middle East as a result of Iraq's policies "would be felt in Europe and beyond."

"Those who choose to live in denial may eventually be forced to live in fear," Bush declared, warning that Saddam seeks nuclear arms and has close ties to terrorists like those who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001.

Separately, US officials said that Bush Cabinet members, starting with Secretary of State Colin Powell, were taking a "get tough" approach with their French counterparts amid

increasing frustration here with Paris over Iraq.

"We're giving the UN time to listen to the arguments and to hopefully come together soon to get a resolution which will achieve the objectives," Bush said later during a joint appearance with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

After that meeting, Bush said he expected Sharon to retaliate in the face of any Iraqi attack, a stark departure from Washington's approach during the 1991 Gulf War, when it urged its close Middle East ally not to respond.

Meanwhile, Powell met with French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie after previewing the new "get tough" strategy in a telephone call earlier in the day with French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, the official said.

"Now is the time for France to act," Powell told de Villepin, one senior State Department official said.

The official, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said Powell would be "gracious but insistent" on the issue of the UN Security Council resolution in his discussions with Alliot-Marie who is opening a two-day visit to Washington.

Powell told a meeting of his senior staff on Wednesday that he planned "to get tough" with Alliot-Marie, according to a second official.

The official said Alliot-Marie could expect to hear the same message when she sees her US counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney and national security advisor Condoleezza Rice on Thursday.

Powell told a senior staff meeting Wednesday he planned "to get tough" with Alliot-Marie, according to a second official, who said the French minister should expect to hear the same message when she sees her US counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney and national security advisor Condoleezza Rice on Thursday.

New law

FROM PAGE 1 weapons, the sources said.

There will also be a timeframe to complete investigation (15-21 days) into offences punishable under the new law and their trial (45-60 days). The trials will follow the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and be presided over by judges with rank and status of district judges.

Earlier on April 10, the government enacted the Law and Order Disruption Crimes (Speedy Trial) Act to try certain crimes. However, the law is employed mainly to try cases of extortion, intimidation, etc and has a maximum punishment of five years in prison.

The new law will be applied for cases that are punishable by sentences above five-year-jail-term.

In another development, the government is mulling constitutional amendment to speed up appeal cases on verdicts of the special tribunals at the higher judiciary.

"New legal provisions could be introduced to ensure that the higher judiciary takes up these cases on a priority basis. If need be, we would amend the constitution and the criminal procedure code."

Saifur

FROM PAGE 12 upazila parishad chairman and the local MP as both would be elected from the same constituency by the same voters.

Saifur pointed out that an MP has to make various pledges during election campaign and he would want to materialise those if elected. "But he would hardly be able to do this if the proposed system is implemented."

The minister said an upazila parishad would mainly comprise non-political persons, whereas an MP is a political person. "So, in presence of an MP, upazila parishad men would not be able to express their views freely and this would lead to a deadlock."

He thought that upazila system was alright when there was a presidential form of government, but it would fail in the present parliamentary system.

Saifur also said the idea of having the local MP as advisor to the upazila parishad is also not in conformity with the Constitution as articles 80 to 92 which concern enactment of laws and use of funds do not say anything about involvement of MPs in fund use.

"So, if funds are allocated and an MP advises regarding certain projects in certain areas, it might lead to a tussle and the very concept of the local government may be jeopardised," he said.

AL sees govt

FROM PAGE 12 vided with is a politically-motivated one or not. If the army can operate independently, we have no problem with that," Saber explained.

A partial list of the detained party leaders was made available to AL yesterday evening.

According to that list, Khulna district AL General Secretary and former AL whip Mustafa Rashidi Suja along with his three brothers and a son, Ward Commissioner Nuru, Jubo League worker Bishnu and district Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Organising Secretary Harun were arrested by army.

In Dhaka, army arrested AL President of Ward no-48 unit Md Selim and raided the residence and business establishment of Dhaka City AL Vice President Fazlur Rahman Razu. They also arrested one of his office staffs from Dolphin Coach Office at Kalabagan.

Detective Branch police raided Segun Bagicha residence of central AL leader Obaidul Kader.

In port city Chittagong, leaders of city unit and other party units Gias Uddin, Hajeje Shafi, Chandan Dhar and three Ward Commissioners Md Giasuddin, Aslam, and Zafar were arrested.

In Sylhet, Ward Commissioner and city unit AL leader Jagadish Das was arrested from his residence. Besides, Sylhet BCL Joint Secretary Ranjeet's four brothers were also arrested.

Scores of other AL, BCL and Jubo League leaders and workers were also arrested in the districts of Panchagar, Kurigram, Tangail, Noakhali, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Netrokona, Bogra and Joipurhat.

Manik dead

FROM PAGE 12 a member of the Executive Committee of the National Press Club.

He was buried at Jurain graveyard in the city after namaje-janaza at Baitul Mukarram Mosque and National Press Club premises after Magrib prayers, family sources said.

Qulqhwani of Manik will be held at his residence at 689, Bara Moghbazar in the city after Asr prayers on Sunday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed deep shock at the death of Muzaffar Hossain Manik.

In a condolence message, the Prime Minister recalled the courageous role of the veteran journalist during democratic movements. She prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Information Minister Tariquul Islam yesterday expressed his deep shock at the death of Manik.

He prayed for salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy for the members of the bereaved family.

The executive committee of the National Press Club yesterday expressed profound shock at the death of its member Muzaffar Hossain Manik.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia listens to Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Hassan Mashhud Chowdhury, briefing her on the progress of the army crackdown on criminals across the country, at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

PM announces plan

FROM PAGE 12 automation of the handling of containers in yard, she informed the function, adding that another yard will be set up in the XY shade area.

She said on completion of the work, Chittagong Port could contribute more to the expansion of the country's import-export trade as well as compete with modern ports in this region in providing improved services.

The prime minister said her government has taken up various projects keeping in mind the importance of developing communication network alongside setting up of modern container terminals for smooth transportation of goods to the country's remote areas.

Another project has been undertaken to upgrade Dhaka-Chittagong highway, including roads connecting the port, she said adding that transportation of containers by roads and railways from the country's main seaport to remote areas has already started.

Initiative has been taken to set up another container terminal at Khanpur in Narayanganj to facilitate the transportation of containers

through river routes from Chittagong and Mongla seaports, Khaleda Zia said.

"But development of infrastructure is not enough, the standard of service needs to be improved. The revenue earning from this seaport can be multiplied if everybody put in honest and sincere efforts," she said.

She pointed out that her government attaches priority to trade policy, not assistance when it comes to international economic relations. "This is why emphasis has been given on import trading alongside promoting export-oriented industries in the country," she told the function.

She said it has become necessary to increase facilities in the seaports and modernise them due to "our thrust on trade".

"We want to ensure loading and unloading of goods and anchoring and departure of ships in time at the Chittagong Port. We want to provide facilities of international standards to each foreign ship," the prime minister said.

Later, she unveiled the plaque of

the foundation stone of Newmooring Container Terminal.

Speaking on the occasion, Commerce Minister Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said investment of Tk 750 crore for setting up of the terminal would go in vain if the port services could not be made efficient to meet the challenges of this competitive business world.

He lamented the relatively higher freight charges in the port saying that the businesspeople have to pay three per cent excess charges for each item compared to other countries.

Shipping Minister Akbor Hossain said environment in the Chittagong Port has improved remarkably after the BNP-led coalition government came to power, and now there is no cargo backlog.

He said a five-member team, comprising exporters, importers and leaders of port workers, will soon visit ports in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Malaysia to assess the standards of their services as well as freight charges, aiming to improve the quality of services in our ports.

1st Test against S Africa

FROM PAGE 1 ers will want to make sure they stay in the squad for tougher challenges later in the season from Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Bangladesh were trounced in three one-day internationals before the Test series. They completed a 100-run win in a four-day warm-up game against South African Country Districts in Bedford Tuesday but their batting, which has been poor on tour, again failed to impress as they were bowled out for totals of 260 and 164 by a weak bowling attack.

The Bangladesh selectors opted for youth when they picked the touring side. Pace bowlers, Tapas Baisya, 19, and Talha Jubair, 17, have both looked promising without threatening to run through teams.

The South African side for the first Test to be played in this coastal city contains eight of the players who finally reversed the trend of last summer by winning the final Test against Australia in Durban in March.

It would have been nine but left-arm spinner Paul Adams was forced out by a back injury and replaced by fellow left-armer Claude Henderson.

Wicketkeeper Mark Boucher will captain the side in his hometown. Boucher took over for the home series against Australia last season because regular skipper Shaun Pollock was injured. Pollock played in the one-day series against Bangladesh but is being rested from the Test because of a strain behind his left knee.

Batsman Martin van Jaarsveld, who made his international debut during the one-day series, wins his first Test cap ahead of the out-of-favour Neil McKenzie, while specialist fast bowler Mornantua Hayward was selected in place of all-rounder Andrew Hall.

Teams
South Africa: Mark Boucher (captain), Herschelle Gibbs, Gary Kirsten,

Graeme Smith, Jacques Kallis, Ashwell Prince, Martin van Jaarsveld, Claude Henderson, Mornantua Hayward, Makhaya Ntini, David Terbrugge, Alfonso Thomas (12thman).

Bangladesh: Khaled Mashud (captain), Al-Shahriar, Javed Omar Belim, Habibul Bashar, Sanwar Hossain, Tushar Imran, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Rafique, Tapash Baisya, Manjurul Islam and Talha Jubair.
Umpires: Daryl Harper (Australia), Russell Tiffin (Zimbabwe).
TV umpire: Shahid Wadvala (South Africa).
Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (Sri Lanka).

Home ministry

FROM PAGE 1 quickly achieve the expected improvement in law and order.

The release said the law enforcing agencies had been facing difficulties in curbing crimes due to their limited manpower and inadequate equipment.

"So, the government has taken a firm stand against any criminal act and is conducting the joint operation with the objective of achieving better results and further improvement in law and order," the ministry said.

It said the decision to include army in the joint operation along with law enforcing agencies was adopted to take effective measures in eliminating criminal activities in the quickest possible time.

The government seeks all-out cooperation of the people to this end, said the press release.

Gas sector

FROM PAGE 1 gas and pays their bills for the gas they explore.

James Stone replied, "We want to sell gas to Bangladesh...not to India." Even he tried to give a calculation with a notion that the government would not be able to pay their bills.

Faruque Khan MP of the AL cautioned that there should not be a situation in which Bangladesh has to buy gas from India at a higher price in future.

Wali Bhuiyan of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) asked why none from the business community was included in any committees. "The issue of best utilisation of gas is a business decision," he thinks.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh chapter of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) said the country signed far more PSCs than required to explore gas for domestic consumption.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, member of the utilisation committee, said the historical growth rate of energy demand is between 10 and 11 per cent and they have presented three scenarios based on five, six and seven per cent gas consumption growth rate.

At seven per cent gas consumption growth rate, the shortfall of gas supply from the present reserve will start in 2014, he said.

Petrobangla Chairman Syed Sajedul Karim said successive governments have put Petrobangla in a position to sell gas to other government corporations at a subsidised rate.

Army swoops

FROM PAGE 1 Among the high-profile political leaders whose residences were raided yesterday are former treasury bench whip in the parliament Mostafa Rashidi Suja and Krishak Sramik Janata League chief Kader Siddiqui, MP. Both avoided arrest as they were not at home during the raids. However, Suja's son and two brothers were arrested in Khulna.

The army operations came in the wake of a steady law and order downside, with the government under pressure from the business community and also the donors to take stern actions against crime.

According to sources, army was to once again go for raids last night. Many mid-to-lower-level activists of different political parties have gone underground following the army operations.

In protest at the raids, different political parties brought out processions at several places across the country. Allegations are there that the army arrested and tortured relatives of 'criminals' who slipped through the dragnet.

Meanwhile, the army remains completely out of contact with the press about the raids and is not taking any help from police. It is conducting the operation based on reports from internal intelligence sources. The government also remained tight-lipped about the raid.

Earlier, a special cabinet committee on Wednesday night discussed law and order and decided to call out the army to tackle the situation, as previous joint police-BDR drives did not yield any result. The decision to deploy army in crime mop-up was kept a top secret.

The raids have already irked many cabinet ministers as news kept pouring in about arrests of their supporters from their constituencies. However, they seem helpless as the highest office of the government is directly monitoring the operation and refuses to entertain any request to free anyone caught during raids.

In the capital, the army arrested 200 persons from different areas and recovered 25 firearms. The arrested were taken to the Mirpur Stadium. Unconfirmed sources said some of the arrested have been taken to the cantonment.

Among the important persons arrested in the capital are three BNP-backed ward commissioners, Mohammad Ismail Hossain Benu of Ward No. 2, Anwaruzzaman of Ward No. 40 and Motahar Hossain Jahangir of Ward No. 52, and Dhaka City General Secretary of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party Tayebur Rahman.

Anwaruzzaman was arrested at dawn from his Raza Bazar residence. He was blindfolded and walked through the neighbourhood before being whisked away. Later, the local BNP brought out a procession to condemn the arrest.

The army also raided the residence of top Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Sagir Ahmed in the old town. He was not home at that time, but the army allegedly beat up his two brothers. Sagir is reported to be a top criminal, operating in the Sadarghat area.

Army teams went to selected areas, cordoned off specific houses and called out the alleged criminals. As soon as the doors were opened, the criminals were tied up, blindfolded and bundled into army trucks. They were also stripped off their shirts.

The Mirpur Stadium where the arrested have been confined was kept off limits to the public. It was not known whether the arrested are being interrogated there.

The army roamed the city at night with lists of JCD and BCL activists who have links to crimes. Sources said some of the criminals sensed the raids as their cell phone networks went out of service and escaped before the army could reach their areas.

While the raids were in process, panic gripped the neighbours, as they were confused about the reason behind the army presence.

Army patrols stopped and searched vehicles at various points of the city throughout the day. People were also frisked. Taxicabs and microbuses were special targets for the army search.

In Tangail, the residence of Kader Siddiqui, MP was searched, with the troops tossing around furniture and messing up the place. However, nothing was found there.

In Magura, the organising secretary of the district BNP Ali Ahmed Biswas was arrested on charge of possessing arms and harbouring criminals during the raid. Later, he was handed over to police and sent to jail. He had 11 criminal cases pending against him.

In Sakthira, two union parishad chairmen were arrested, one of them belonging to the BNP.

Chittagong
In a pre-dawn raid, army patrol picked up about 100 political activists and leaders belonging mostly to the ruling BNP and the AL.

The army picked up former ward commissioner of Patenga Md. Ismail, Jubo Dal city unit president Abul Hasbem Bakkar, JCD new committee member-secretary Yasin Chowdhury Liton, former JCD general secretary Md. Ali and organising secretary of the AL, Chittagong north chapter, Gias Uddin.

Besides, Anwar Hossain Milon, Morshed Khan, Shah Alam, SMG Akbar of the BNP and Aslam, Shahidullah and Saleh Ahmed of the AL were detained, sources added.

Talking to The Daily Star, wife of AL leader Gias Uddin said army personnel picked her husband up from the door after he had answered to their vigorous knocking. He was not allowed to go back inside and several army men launched a search for arms in the house.

"I think my husband was taken to the cantonment. But we do not know about his exact whereabouts," she said.

Rajshahi
At least 15 people, including leaders and activists of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), were arrested in pre-dawn army raids.

The arrested include Rezaun Nabi Al Mamun, commissioner of ward No. 15 of the Rajshahi City Corporation, Sumon of Pathanpara, Kala Faruk, a Jubo Dal leader, and Abdul Kuddus Dollar, organising secretary of the Molihar thana unit of the Jubo Dal.

The JCD and ICS have created a virtual deadlock on the Rajshahi University campus, protesting the army raid in which five leaders and activists of the two student wings were arrested.

Also, the angry JCD activists damaged six vehicles at the university bus-stop and besieged the administrative building yesterday.

Classes and examinations of the university could not be held due to agitation yesterday.

An army officer is learnt of have verbally abused Professor Abu Bakar Siddique, provost of the Zoha Hall, on the telephone.

Quazi Mamun Rana, president of the Zia Hall unit of ICS, was arrested in his room. Also arrested were two ICS activists and as many outsiders on the campus.

The army vandalised students' rooms and spread a reign of terror in the Sher-e-Bangla Hall, attacking the sleeping students and arresting JCD hall unit President Aminur Rashid Zinnah.

The pro-vice-chancellor, Professor Dr Shahadat Hossain Mondol and the students' advisor, Professor Dr Rafiqul Islam, told The Daily Star that the army did not seek permission from the university authorities.

Narayanganj
The army arrested three criminals and the joint convener of the city BNP in a two-hour raid starting at 9:30am yesterday.

The arrested are MA Majid, the joint convener, his younger brother Hasan, a notorious criminal, Shakil, a Jubo Dal cadre, and Tapan, also a criminal.

Feni
Former convener of the Jubo Dal district unit Monwar Hossain Dulal and former president of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) district unit Jahangir Mohammad Adel were arrested.

Khulna
Five persons were arrested by the army Wednesday night. The arrested include 'Khachar' Selim, a chargesheeted accused in the Journalist Shamsur Rahman murder case and Mohammad Nurunnabi, a chargesheeted accused in the Udichi murder case.

The army also arrested some notorious smugglers. In Rupsha Upazila, 89 people were arrested and 48 of them were released.

Also arrested was former whip of parliament Mostafa Rashidi Suja belonging to the Awami League.

Shuja's son Shukarno and younger brothers Muzaffar Rashidi Reza and Moazzem Rashidi Doja are among others arrested.

Arrested were senior BNP leader and former MP Abdul Gaffar Biswas and ward commissioners of the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) - Nurul Huq, Anis Biswas and Abul Kalam.

Sources said Awami League activists Berek, Rashid, Aslam Biswas, Raju Biswas, Tarek, Shantu, Bishnu Pada Shagor and BCL leader Harun were also arrested. Sramik Dal leader Abdul Latif and BNP leader Salek have also been nabbed in the army crackdown.

Bagerhat
Fakirhat Sadar Union Parishad Chairman Monirul Islam Moni was arrested.

Rangpur
Twenty-four criminals were netted last night in the Rangpur town and its adjoining areas.

Among the arrested are SK Kamal, Tutul, Meheria Biswas Tapan, Shahidur Rahman Dollar, Tahmidul Raja, Abu Shahin, Tiger and Noor-e-Alam.

Bogra flares up

FROM PAGE 1 At around 11:30am, the army opened fire to disperse the mob and pulled away the barricades. The army also clubbed the protesters, leaving 10 persons including a photojournalist injured.

When the army left the spot, the agitators returned and put up barricades on the road again. They also burnt tires on the highway.

At 1:30pm, the army men led by a lieutenant colonel requested the BNP leaders to withdraw barricade. But the protesters held their ground.

At around 2:40pm, as the army tried to remove the barricade, the protesters threw bricks at the army. At one stage, a shot was fired at the army.

In response, the army fired back leaving the rickshawpuller dead.

At around 3:00pm, the situation came under control.