

Arms statement

Baghdad promises to meet UN deadline

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraq promised yesterday to meet a UN deadline to hand over a declaration on its arms programmes, but insisted it had no weapons of mass destruction to confess to.

In line with Baghdad's policy of at least apparent compliance with UN inspections in the hope of averting a threatened US attack, an Iraqi official said a statement would be provided on Saturday -- a day before time runs out.

"We are going to deliver this declaration in the proper time on the seventh of this month and the people here, the UNMOVIC and IAEA, will take this declaration to New York and Vienna," said Hussam Mohammed Amin, head of the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate, referring to the two arms inspection bodies.

Asked if the declaration would include any new elements, he said: "Of course the declaration will have new elements but these new elements will not, shall we say, necessarily include a declaration of the presence of weapons of mass destruction."

"We are a country devoid of

weapons of mass destruction. This fact is known to all countries including the United States of America and Britain and all those concerned."

US President George Bush said on Monday Iraq had to supply a "credible and complete" list of its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons by Sunday -- the December 8 deadline set by UN Security Council Resolution 1441.

In the range of Iraqi technology being investigated by UN experts, there are many grey areas -- such as components which can be used to

See also page 9

produce weapons of mass destruction, but can also be used in conventional arms or peaceful civilian activities.

Baghdad's promised declaration might fall within such grey areas. A source close to the UN inspectors told Reuters Iraqi officials had recently admitted to trying to acquire aluminum tubing in violation of UN sanctions, but not for use in the production of nuclear arms as the US and Britain alleged.

An Iraqi spokesman however

denied on Tuesday that Iraq had made any such admission at all.

Bush told military leaders: "Any act of delay, deception or defiance will prove that Saddam Hussein has not adopted the path of compliance and has rejected the path of peace."

"So far the steps are not encouraging."

UN arms inspectors searched one of the Iraqi president's palace compounds in Baghdad yesterday in the biggest test of Iraqi cooperation since arms inspections resumed.

Teams of inspectors entered al-Sojoud palace, one of several presidential compounds across Iraq, in central Baghdad. Inspections of presidential palaces were a source of confrontation between Iraq and UN inspectors in the 1990s.

"Open the gate, we want to come in," an inspector told guards at the palace gate. "We can't, we are waiting for orders," one replied. The inspector protested and a few minutes later the gates were opened.

The UN Security Council demands that access to sites be immediate and unfettered.



An Afghan child carries water in tea pots to his home in Paghman, some 15 km west of Kabul yesterday. In most villages people lack drinking water and need to get it from streams or wells.

PHOTO: AFP

JS body formation

FROM PAGE 12

our (opposition MPs) names to them (government). Actually, by not forming the parliamentary standing committees, they (government) have proved that they don't believe in establishing accountability in governance."

Shahid recalled that before the third session of the eighth parliament was summoned, the government had promised at a meeting of the donors-supported 'Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy' programme, that it would form the committees soon, but it has not done so even after holding of two more sessions of the parliament.

Echoing Khandakar Delwar's earlier statements to the press, the prime minister also told a CPA delegation on October 8 that the committees would be formed keeping the places for the opposition MPs vacant, if the opposition did not give the names of its candidates.

Yet another session of the Jatiya Sangsad was held in November, but not a single ministerial standing committee of the parliament has been formed till date.

Remembering, during its rule (1996-2001) the Awami League took one and a half years to form the committees. However, the AL

showed the changes that it brought into the system as an excuse for that delay. The AL brought about a change in the Jatiya Sangsad's Rules of Procedure (RoP) by incorporating the provision for non-minister MPs to head the parliamentary committees as chairperson. Previously, ministers themselves used to head the committees on their respective ministries.

The AL now feels that in the absence of the committees the government is getting away with many of its alleged corrupt practices, as there is no scope of discussion in the committees. Some ruling party insiders also feel that formation of standing committees would further delay would rather brighten the image of the government, as it had promised accountability and transparency.

"AL's delay in forming the committees during its regime (1996-2001) should not be an example for the BNP to follow," commented Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain.

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The temptation to subscribe to such a view is all the more when Putin is coming to New Delhi from a visit to China.

The proposal for a strategic triangle emanated from Moscow in the mid-1990s but analysts in New Delhi say none of the three countries is willing to signal that they are ganging up against the sole super power, the United States.

In the current global scenario, such a triangle appears highly unlikely given the fact that India, Russia and China are keen to strengthen relations with the US independent of each other.

Promtly responding to Putin's fears, Vajpayee said on Monday that the international community, especially allies of Pakistan, must take a serious note of Putin's warning.

The remarks by Putin and Vajpayee, say the officials, clearly reflect that India and Russia are on the same wavelength as far as the issue of terrorism is concerned.

Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said Monday night that "if the international community is concerned about fundamentalism, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, Pakistan has all the three ingredients and has to be looked at closely."

India is also keen on expanding ties with Russia in the energy sector, given the growing energy needs of India. Both the countries are likely to boost their cooperation in civilian nuclear programme with New Delhi looking forward to additional nuclear reactors besides the two already in use for a power project in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

No doubt, Russian will be called upon to take a key political decision in the area of nuclear energy cooperation with India in view of Western pressure. India's argument is that it has an absolutely clean record on nuclear proliferation despite not being a signatory to Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Every time there is a high-level

PM tells mission officials

Increase manpower export to S Arabia

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia advised the Bangladesh mission officials in Saudi Arabia to make all-out effort to enhance remittances and investment from there as well as increase the country's manpower export to the Kingdom.

She was addressing the officials and employees of the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh, consul general's office at Jeddah and Hajj Office in Makkah at a meeting in the holy city Monday afternoon, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

During her stay in Makkah for the fourth day Monday, the Prime Minister offered her Asr, Magreb, Esha and Tarabi prayers at Masjidul Haram.

She asked the Bangladesh officials and employees to work actively for convincing the Saudi authorities so that more skilled and semi-skilled workers from Bangladesh are recruited to different sectors in Saudi Arabia.

Khaleda thanked the Bangladeshis working in Saudi Arabia for remitting home their wage earnings. She told the officials to make sure that the remittances come through legal channels.

The Prime Minister directed them to project the investment opportuni-

ties available in Bangladesh and facilities given to foreign investors in order to attract Saudi entrepreneurs.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Muhammad Mosaddeq Ali, Bangladesh ambassador to Saudi Arabia SK Sharjil Hasan, Consul General Neyamat Ullah, and Chief of Protocol AM Yakub Ali, among others, were present in the meeting.

The Prime Minister also asked the officials to pay special attention to Bangladeshi pilgrims during the upcoming hajj so that they can perform the hajj "properly and in a disciplined manner upholding the country's image".

Later, Begum Zia held a meeting with Saudi-based BNP and its front organisation leaders and workers urging them to uphold the country's image through hard work in their respective fields.

Among others, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, PM's political secretary Mosaddeq Ali, BNP and its front organisation leaders Maulana Rafique Ahmed, Dr Fazle Akbar, Shamim Ahsan Tuhin, SM Anwar, Faruk Ahmed Chand and Alhaj MA Rahim were present.

Khaleda Zia is expected to return home this morning.

Putin-Vajpayee talks

FROM PAGE 12

"economic declaration" to enhance bilateral trade.

Defence is the biggest area of cooperation between the two, with Russia being India's main supplier of defence products - a fact that is also expected to figure prominently in the talks.

The Russian leader and Indian prime minister are also expected to address a joint press conference on Wednesday evening.

Putin will depart from New Delhi on Thursday morning.

Meanwhile, in an interview to a leading Indian newspaper and a television channel, the Russian president voiced concern over the possibility of weapons of mass destruction Pakistan possesses falling into the hands of "bandits and terrorists".

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political interaction between India and Russia, there is speculation about the two countries as well as China coming together forming a "strategic triangle."

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Festivity

FROM PAGE 12

ber of visitors decreased," noted Mohammed Rajib of Generation 2000 at "Bastra Shilpa Mela 2002" in Dhanmondi.

While the salespersons grumbled about the poor sale, the visitors are reluctant to buy anything in the fair since in most cases the prices there are higher than those in the market. Moreover, the lack of such facilities as changing or returning purchased goods from a fair discourages them. "I opt for the shopping centres for Eid shopping since I can choose among an array of things," said Abu Saleh Siddiqui, who came to hang out at Eid Ananda Mela (Eid Fun Fair) at the Rawa Club premises.

Some of the visitors at different fairs observed that the fairs are not offering anything special to live up to their expectation. "It is all the same old goods with same old designs that can be found in markets," said Nasreen Haque, a government employee.

There are design houses displaying their products at different corners of the city. Among them are exhibition of hand painted dresses by 'Drapper' at Dhanmondi, collection of punjabi by Meena Bazar, exhibition of kurta pyjama by Kay Kraft and Karupanya Mela by Aftab Karupanya at the Women Volunteer Association auditorium.

Cricket lovers

FROM PAGE 10

Monjurul, Aloke, Tapash and Rokon took one each in a like manner. Sanwar, nervous like a hare, dropped a precious catch that of Ricardo Powell unaccountably. Sanwar, however, made it up in batting by stealing runs through the slip and the gully before rain came and said, enough is enough boy. He was not out with 18, the same score that Aloke made, also not out.

Cricket, as Neville Cardus once said, is a game of glorious uncertainty, and Bangladesh were seen poised yesterday to confirm it.

The way cricket matches are producing results today does show that the difference between the better teams and the not so good teams is ever widening, and it is not anymore fair to call Bangladesh the only whipping boys. Only a few weeks ago, Australia thrashed Pakistan like errant schoolboys. Australia is now pounding England into abject submission, and South Africa have made Jayasuria and his peers forget their fathers' names, and Pakistan, in its turn, is taking its revenge on Zimbabwe.

And, when this present West Indies team arrived in India for a 2-test and 7-ODI series, Bisen Singh Bedi reed in his panelist column that no such wuek WI team had ever played in India before. WI, then, responding to his criticism, made a clean breast of it by

winning the ODI series 4-3.

That the same WI team (except for Hooper) is now playing Bangladesh means that the latter team has a point to prove here. If, and if, Bangladesh can win either an ODI or a Test, then thousands of us will lay our hearts down for our golden boys to walk on.

Everybody present in the stadium yesterday felt that Bangladesh had the potential but not the right attitude. Give them a psychological booster!

Dhaka slates

FROM PAGE 1

Anwar Khan sent two letters to his counterpart ML Gosal reminding him about the agreement and drew his attention to the BSF obstruction.

Anwar in his letter informed his counterpart that 70 per cent of the embankment works has already been completed, but the BSF obstruction has put the project in limbo.

Earlier on November 15 and 16, the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the BSF traded heavy fire at two border outposts in Satkhira over the jetty construction on the Kalindi.

The BSF fired about 1,500 rounds of machinegun shots during the skirmish, while the BDR responded with 300 shots. No casualties were however reported.

Army dragnet

FROM PAGE 1

parts of the Tejuri Bazar area and arrested five criminals during iftar time. It also seized two arms and some crackers from their possession.

In Chittagong, the army arrested two persons and seized seven firearms and ten rounds of bullets.

In Khulna, the coastguards rescued 91 more minor children from Dublar Char of the Sunderbans on Monday.

With this, the coastguards have so far rescued 227 minor children from the area over the last 12 days.

Sources said there are four hideouts of human traffickers at Dublarchar, Alorok, Andhar Manik and Meher Char along the Sunderbans.

Earlier, two human traffickers Mohammad Mofiz and Dulal Miah, arrested on November 21, gave sensational information on the kidnapped children and the criminals' hideout in the area.

Our Jhenidah correspondent reports that a listed criminal, who hid in a poultry farm at Poyrerabazar, Shaikakupa, to avoid army arrest, was electrocuted yesterday morning. Shamsul Alam went into hiding

since the army drives started and recently took shelter in a poultry farm where he died yesterday. The body was sent to the Jhenidah Sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

In Joypurhat, the army arrested four identified criminals and recovered two foreign made revolvers from Akkelpur and Kalai upazila Monday night.

Our Sirajgonj correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested two people and recovered arms from their possession.

In Pabna, the joint forces arrested two people and recovered two revolvers, a grenade along with ammunition, our correspondent reports.

Meanwhile, the police headquarters, in a press release, said they arrested 1,108 people, including seven identified criminals, from different parts of the country in the last 24 hours ending at 6.00am yesterday. They also seized nine firearms, five other weapons along with 29 bullets.

A Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) press release said they arrested 189 people during a special drive in the capital yesterday.

UN terror list

FROM PAGE 1

Yemen," the release added. Rafiqul Islam, Director of Registration at the Bureau of NGO Affairs when contacted yesterday said, "There is no record of activities of the organisation in the country".

Another official there said two organisations named Benevolence International Organisation (BIO) and Benevolence Trust (BT) were registered with the Bureau in 1992 and 1996 respectively.

Records show the BIO has its office at Gulshan-1 but no such establishment could be traced during investigation, he said.

This correspondent also talked to the owner of the house, the address of which was recorded with the bureau as the BIO office.

He said, "I have been residing in the house since 1991. I never heard about the NGO (BIO)".

The bureau official said BT, a locally funded NGO, had recorded the address of a house in Dhanmondi residential area as its office.

When contacted, officials at the

Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) said they are not aware of existence of BIF, BIO and BT. They are not ADAB members, they said.

The foreign ministry also said, "There is no such organisation active in the country".

To comply with the UN instruction, the ministry asked the NGO Bureau and the central bank to investigate the matter. But no such organisation was found active in the country, an official said.

UN member-states are required to freeze funds and assets of organisations subjected to sanctions, and to prevent entry or transit of persons involved with those through the country.

The UN list is upgraded regularly by a Security Council Committee on the basis of information provided by member states and regional organisations as required under Security Council resolutions.

Mad hunt

FROM PAGE 12 bus owners are reluctant to arrange special bus services before the eid this time as there is no scope of realising extra fare due to army patrol at the terminals.

An employee of a transport company said that at least 20 to 25 per cent of people willing to go home by bus are destined to get frustrated due to inadequate number of buses this time. "People planning to go at the last moment will be the worst sufferers," he added.

On the other hand, some bus companies, especially those operating their vehicles in the routes to the southern region of the country were selling tickets just an hour before the scheduled trips. This was causing sufferings to passengers. Jostling, pushing each other and altercation among passengers were common sights at ticket counters.

Kamalapur railway station was also seen crowded with thousands passengers yesterday. Tickets for trains were already sold in advance.

A similar scene was witnessed at Sadarghat launch terminal. Many of the launches were overloaded in violation of restrictions in this regard.

Recruiters

FROM PAGE 1

According to official statistics, more than 100,000 Bangladeshi workers go to Saudi Arabia every year, most as cleaners, and domestic and farm hands.

Earlier, the government warned recruiters several times against pushing migration cost higher than the official rate.

Local recruiters, on the other hand, blame a section Saudi Arabians-based middlemen and recruitment agencies for the cost hike.

There are also middlemen in other Middle Eastern countries but the government is yet to collect their names.

Recruiters say they are forced to buy visa advice at higher rates because of hard competition with India and Nepal.

A high official at the expatriate ministry, meanwhile, told The Daily Star that the government did not want to hamper manpower export to Saudi Arabia. It only wants to streamline it and save workers from exploitation, he added.

More than one million Bangladeshis are living in Saudi Arabia and contribute more than sixty per cent of the total remittance.

Eviction drive

FROM PAGE 12

At least a dozen illegal mosque-cum-madrassahs stand along the Buriganga, which need to be removed to ensure free flow of the river. The mosques at Sadarghat, Swarighat, Shyampur and in other places have been set up illegally, the BIWTA sources said.

"The mosque-cum-madrassahs have been raising money from local businessmen and innocent devotees for years. The people in charge of the madrassahs are using loudspeakers day and night to raise funds," said a BIWTA official.

He added that they are misrepresenting religion and whenever the BIWTA tried to talk to them about removing the illegal structures, the mosque committees tacitly raised an outcry. Using religion as an instrument, they have enjoyed total immunity from the law and encroached on the public land and the river.

The shipping minister expressed firm commitment to removing the encroachments, saying the national committee on freeing the river from encroachers, would meet again after Eid holidays.

"We are aware of the problem. We want to sit and plan out a way to solve it," said the minister.

"We'll hold talks with them (mosque committees) and try to convince them to withdraw. If the talks fail, we have to officially get the land back," he added.

Not in banks

FROM PAGE 1

change were seen yesterday. Such customers were coming even from the city's peripheral areas because the gang members and officials of banks are channeling the 'change' into the booming market through a network of agents.

The traders said they are merely working for a group of people who supply them the coins and notes.

Abdur Rashid, a trader in Gulistan area, yesterday said the demand for the newly issued notes is so high because most of those have virtually vanished from circulation. With the eid nearing, the demand is increasing at such a rate that the suppliers cannot cope with it, he added.

"I am going to Rjshahi tonight to get some notes for Dhaka market," Rashid said. A section of BB officials and officials of other banks are making crores of taka through this trade, some trades said.

"Each one of us earn about taka 200 to 300 as commission every day. Big amounts are earned by big bosses who remain behind the scene," said one trader.

Windies wrap up

FROM PAGE 1

Drakes stunned the home crowd into silence when he removed Mohammed Ashraful for only one.

A lot was expected from the talented teenager after an enterprising 44 on Monday. However, he was deceived by a slower one from Drakes and offered a simple catch to Wavell Hinds at mid-on.

Although Ashraful failed, his academy mate Anwar Hossain rose to the occasion on debut.

The 19-year-old playing his first match as an opener scored a polished 42 off 106 balls that included half a dozen fours.

But it was Alok Kapali who stole the show with a career-best 89 off 93 balls. The previous best of the 19-year-old all-rounder was 45 against South Africa. The young right-hander entertained the holiday crowd with ten glorious boundaries.

Kapali's effort in a desperate situation was also the highest of the match. He shared 67 runs for the fifth wicket with Anwar and 42 for the sixth with skipper Khaled Mashud, who scored 16 before being bowled by Gayle.

The lanky Jamaican enjoyed a fruitful day both with bat and ball. He followed up his 14th half century with three scalps in his 62nd one-day appearance.

Gayle showed glimpses of his

terrific form in India, where he scored three hundreds, with 11 hits across the rope before being caught behind while trying to cut occasional off-spinner Sanwar Hossain.

He shared 110 runs for the second wicket with Samuels after his opening partner Hinds was yorked by Taposh. Samuels followed up his 82 in the second one-day with a typically aggressive 77. It was his ninth half century in 39 ODIs.

The powerfully-built Jamaican right-hander struck four boundaries and two mighty sixes before being bowled by Rafique.

Rammaresh Sarwan, who scored his maiden ton on Monday night, looked impressive with 28 before being holed out in the deep off off-spinner Naimur Rahman.

Naimur continued his good run of form with ball, conceding only 32 runs in 10 overs.

Left-arm paceman Monjurul Islam bite the dust after two good outings. The experienced bowler went for 77 runs in 10 overs without any success.

Both teams will enjoy a short break before the first Test starts at the same venue on December 8.

Tinni murder

FROM PAGE 1

"We are examining the statements given by 17 acquaintances of Tinni. We are scrutinising whether there is any false statement or contradictory information by any of the 17 persons," he added.

If any such thing happens, any of the 17 persons may be called for further questioning, he added.

Police are yet to track down former lawmaker Golan Faruk Ovi, a key murder suspect. The CID believes that Ovi is in hiding somewhere in the city.

Keraniganj police recovered the body of Tinni with injury marks from under the Buriganga Bridge on November 16.

Four days later, the unclaimed body was handed over to the Anjuman Mufidul Islam, a charity, for burial.

The murder came to light when Tinni's family members identified the body seeing her photograph in a newspaper. Keraniganj police handed over the case to the CID on November 23. The CID exhumed Tinni's body from Jurain graveyard in the city on Monday for a second autopsy.

Police arrested Tinni's housemaids Shefali and Bina while her husband Shafkat Hossain Piyal surrendered to them.

Moreover, police questioned Tinni's father Syed Mahbulul Karim, uncle and her father-in-law Mahmudul Haq. Ovi's brother-in-law Aminul Islam, friend Swapan Gazi and actor Mir Sabbir, cameraman Sohnel Awlad, actor Tamalika Karmakar, scriptwriter Eaj Munna, producer Eaj Khan Swapan, actors Shahriar Najim Joy and Kazi Naser.

Human chain

FROM PAGE 12

ised the human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Journalists with placards and banners formed the human chain that started at 12:00 noon and lasted for about half an hour.

In a brief address at the end of the demonstration, BFUJ President lqbal Sobhan Chowdhury urged the government to stop repression on journalists. Otherwise, he warned, the media men would launch a tougher movement after the Eid vacation. He demanded immediate release of Saleem Samad.

Among others, BFUJ Secretary General Secretary Akhter Ahmed Khan, Treasurer Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, former DUJ President Altaf Mahmud, and DUJ General Secretary Molla Jalal joined the human