

US military buildup in Gulf enters final phase

AFP, Washington

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has signed an order deploying "significant" ground forces, combat aircraft and logistics support to the Gulf, marking the beginning of a final buildup for a likely war against Iraq, the Washington Post reported yesterday.

Citing senior defence officials, the Post reported that the classified order - a 20-plus-page document that Rumsfeld signed Tuesday - identifies an array of forces and capabilities, including mechanised infantry units, midair refuelers and medical facilities that will be shipped and airlifted to Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and other Gulf nations in the coming weeks.

The deployment order leaves to the individual military services to decide what specific units will fulfil Rumsfeld's force requirements.

"It's a little bit of everything, and it's very comprehensive," said one official, who declined to specify how many individuals would be affected by the order. "It's heavy on the logistics side."

AP adds: The Pentagon has ordered a major military force to the Persian Gulf in preparation for a possible war with Iraq.

Thousands of troops, two aircraft carrier battle groups and scores of combat aircraft have received orders since Christmas to ready themselves

to head to the region in January and February, defence officials said Friday.

The Bush administration waited until after the holiday to issue the orders, which alert units across the United States and possibly overseas to prepare for deployment to the Persian Gulf, officials said. Officials said tens of thousands of military personnel will receive orders to go to the region, but a precise figure was unavailable.

Some of the units being sent to the region are combat-ready, including infantry units, warships and strike aircraft, officials said. Many more are logistics, engineering and support teams, which will prepare for the arrival of even larger combat units in the months ahead, officials said. They will add to the 50,000 US military personnel already in the region.

"We don't comment on specific unit deployments. However, forces will be flowing to the region to be in place should the president decide to use them," said Jim Wilkinson, a spokesman at US Central Command, which would oversee operations in Iraq.

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last week such deployments will "reinforce diplomacy." The Bush administration hopes the threat of military action will increase the pressure on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to fully disclose his efforts to acquire chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

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Aggressive export expansion plan

3 business promotion councils, offices in US, Europe on cards

RAFIQ HASAN

The government will set up three business promotion councils in the country and open offices abroad to diversify export items and tap new markets.

The councils will focus on three major potential export sectors - information technology (IT), light engineering and agro-processing, according to commerce ministry sources.

On the other hand, the export promotion offices will be set up in

Los Angeles, Munich and London. The Los Angeles office will be set up in the Silicon Valley in cooperation with the America Bangladesh Business Association.

The government would provide necessary logistics and the association would run the office to promote software export from Bangladesh, according to sources. The government has a target of earning \$40 million during the current fiscal from software export.

The London and Munich offices would be set up with British and

German financial assistance.

According to sources, the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) has already started the initiative to set up a business promotion council on information technology at its building while the two other councils are likely to be set up at the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) Bhaban at Karwan Bazar.

According to sources, the government primarily selected the three sectors because of their immense potentiality.

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CEC asks officials to hold Sandwip pouro polls in free, fair manner

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed yesterday gave strict orders to all concerned including law-enforcers to hold Sandwip Poursava elections in a free, fair and impartial manner.

The CEC gave his directives in a meeting at the Election Commission (EC).

Election Commissioners Saifur Rahman, M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, acting secretary of the EC SM Zakaria, deputy commissioner and superintendent of police of Chittagong and the returning officer concerned were present.

The meeting decided to deploy adequate number of law enforcers to ensure that the candidates could conduct their campaigns without any impediment and the voters

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Rickshawpuller slaughtered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rickshaw-puller was slaughtered at South Mugdapara in the city Friday night.

The dead was identified as Nurul Islam Bisha, 35, son of one Ibrahim Fakir of South Mugda.

Sabujbagh police arrested one Milan from the Basabo Wahab Colony yesterday noon for his suspected involvement in the murder.

Police recovered Bisha's body from the ground floor of an under-construction building of one Hemayet Uddin at South Mugda at 9:00 am. The body was later sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Police said Milan and two others went to Bisha's residence Friday evening and Bisha got out with them in the night. His body was found in the morning. The three used to visit Bisha's residence.

Meanwhile, two people, identified as Muhammad Dulal and Muhammad Raju, aged 30 years each, died in a road accident at North Maniknagar in the city's Sabujbagh area at about 3:30 yesterday morning.

Sabujbagh police said the accident took place when the two were fleeing in a hijacked motorcycle. A speedy truck ran over them, instantly killing the both.

Tk 7.61 lakh snatched in Siddhirganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Armed miscreants snatched away Tk 7.61 lakh from two staff of Mamata Tobacco Agency from Kadamtali area in Siddhirganj thana yesterday morning.

According to police, a gang of seven miscreants intercepted the two employees at Sonamia market in the area while they were going to deposit the money with a nearby Janata Bank branch.

The gang snatched the money at gunpoint and fled the scene exploding crackers.

Abbasuddin, an employee of Mamata Tobacco, lodged a case with Siddhirganj thana in this connection.

None was arrested till 6 pm yesterday.

Tinni's killer still at large

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have failed to catch the prime suspect in the model Tania Mahub Tinni murder case.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the police has so far confined its probe to only quizzing a number of actors and acquaintances of Tinni.

The prime suspect in the murder case, Jatiya Party (Monju) leader Golam Faruk Ovi is still at large. He went into hiding in the capital after the body of Tinni was recovered from under the Buriganga bridge on November 11.

Sources said Ovi could not be traced due to his close relationship with an influential assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of the Detective Branch (DB). The police officer allegedly is sheltering him.

Meanwhile, Shafiqul Islam Jewel, allegedly a drug dealer and porno businessman said during interrogation by the Narcotics Control Department (NCD) that he was working for Ovi for long.

The NCD arrested Jewel in the city's Gulshan area on December 18 with a huge quantity of drugs and porno magazines.

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Graft case against DPHE officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) has filed a graft case against six present and former officials of the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) and a contractor for misappropriating about Tk 31 lakh.

The accused are Kuddusur Rahman, superintendent engineer, Dhaka Circle; Rezaul Karim, superintendent engineer; Tajmilar Rahman, former executive engineer, Cox's Bazar; MA Kalam, former executive engineer; Abul Monzur, sub-assistant engineer and Jahannara Bulbul, cashier at the executive engineer's office in Cox's

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LOOKALIKES



Two congress party members, one dressed as Mahatma Gandhi, left, and another with hair colour similar to Indira Gandhi, attend a meeting in Bhopal yesterday on the occasion of the 118th anniversary of the party.

PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: STAR

President Iajuddin Ahmed and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman are seen with art award winners at the launch of the 15th National Art Exhibition at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

Dazzling display of colours, emotions

Over 250 artists join 15th nat'l art show

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 15th National Art Exhibition 2002 opened at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

President Iajuddin Ahmed inaugurated the month-long exhibition and distributed prizes among winning artists.

In his address to the inaugural function, he said the exhibition would make people aware of artworks. "It's a matter of pride that the artists of the country have

been able to draw the attention of art lovers and civil society at home and abroad. Many had already earned rare honour for their artworks," he said.

Presided over by State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, the inaugural function was addressed by Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Nazmul Ahsan Chowdhury, Director

General of the Shilpakala Academy Ahmed Nazir and chief of the academy's fine arts department Subir Chowdhury.

Two hundred and eighty-six works of 238 artists and the works of 15 invited artists are on exhibition. The artworks were executed in different media like oil, watercolour, tempera, acrylic, mixed media, graphics and sculptures

with different materials. "Artists help expand our inner eye, deepens our observation power and enrich our thinking capability," the president said. He recalled the pioneering role of Shilapacharya Zainul Abedin and paid tribute to artist SM Sultan.

The president distributed awards among nine leading artists for their works this year. The artists were given crests, certificates and money.

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Octane use offsets clean air hope

CNG-run autorickshaw drivers complain of engine heating-up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most of the CNG-run autorickshaws are using octane instead of compressed natural gas (CNG).

If the vehicles run on octane, it will certainly pollute the air, cautioned experts.

Earlier, the government banned two-stroke autorickshaws running on petrol to stave off severe air pollution in the city.

According to owners and drivers of the vehicles, the continuous use of CNG makes the engine dry, leading to its damage. So, they have settled for octane as fuel.

Some others said they use octane to avoid long queues for

CNG at only 11 CNG refuelling stations in the city.

Mohammad Jinnat Ali, a CNG auto-rickshaw driver, said his owner told him to use octane in the morning and at night to keep the engine in shape. He uses CNG in the daytime, of course.

If a two-stroke engine gets out of order, it takes Tk 800 to 900 for repair. But the repair cost may go up to several thousands for four-stroke engines, he claimed.

The 11 CNG refuelling stations are located in Alenbari, Mohakhali, Kalyanpur, Asadgate, Motijheel, Gabtali and Banani each, and four in Tejgaon.

More than five thousand CNG-

run vehicles are plying city roads.

According to another CNG autorickshaw driver, Sheikh Salek, he uses octane as the cylinder of four-stroke engine contains only three litres of gas. Salek does not want to go to a refuelling centre at least twice a day for CNG.

In disagreement to common views, Mizan Hossain, a CNG technician of the Southern Automobiles Limited, said that there was no reason for the piston of the engine being dry if CNG is used as fuel. The function of CNG and octane is the same, he added.

Mohammad Mohiuddin, a director of the Natural Gas Fuelling

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College student dies of dengue fever in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Hafiza Akhtar, 22, a third-year (Honours) student of the English department of Govt. BL College, Daulatpur, died of dengue fever at the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) yesterday morning.

Hafiza's father Jinnat Ali Shikder alleged that his daughter, who was admitted to the hospital on Friday, was not given proper medical care. Teachers and students of BL College English department strongly condemned the hospital authorities for their alleged negligence in giving proper medical care to Hafiza and demanded an impartial inquiry into the matter.

The body of the dengue victim was taken to Chitalmari upazila of Bagerhat district yesterday morning.

Hired criminals occupy Hadith foundation bldg at Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A group of hired criminals forcibly occupied the five-storey Hadith Foundation Bhaban in the city's Kajla area after beating up four employees of the foundation in the early hours of yesterday.

Sources said the gang went to the foundation building in a truck and four minibuses and entered it after breaking open the main gate. They beat up all four employees of the foundation - Mahmud Hossain, Nizamuddin, Abu Bakkar and Abdul Halim, and drove them out of the building.

The foundation authorities claimed that Bayezid, a muezzin of

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Taskforce to be formed to recover khas land

UNB, Dhaka

The government has decided to form a taskforce to recover khas land occupied by grabbers through fake deeds.

Information is being collected as to how much land have been occupied by way of forged deeds. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) will be convener of the taskforce.

The decision was taken at the monthly coordination meeting of the deputy commissioners with Minister for Land M Shamsul Islam in the chair.

The meeting directed the DCs of all the districts to strengthen activities for collection of land development tax and find out the amount overdue with various agencies.

It also decided to ask the DCs to submit the actual amount of overdue tax to the ministry before the next meeting.

Tarajuddin murder case Hearing on naraji petition Jan 16

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka has fixed January 16 for hearing on the naraji petition (no-confidence) regarding names in the chargesheet in the Tarajuddin murder case.

Magistrate Mohammad Shafiq Anwar issued the order yesterday upon a petition by the complainant of the case, Mohammad Nurul Islam, submitted on November 30.

In the petition, the complainant said names of Sajedul Islam Chowdhury alias Dipu Chowdhury, son of former state minister for shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Sourav Das and Rana were included in the chargesheet submitted on November 6 though he and other prosecution witnesses did not mention their names to the investigation officer (IO). The chargesheet was submitted against 23 accused.

Tarajuddin, on November 30 had also submitted an affidavit before the court, saying that Dipu, Sourav and Rana were not present at the spot when the incident took place, thereby contradicting the FIR in the case, filed by him.

Tarajuddin, president of a cooperative society at Narda in the city's Uttara area, was gunned down by an armed gang on February 8 last year.

On the following day, Nurul Islam filed a murder case with Uttara thana, accusing Dipu Chowdhury and 22 others.

But in the affidavit, Nurul Islam said that he had filed the FIR without properly knowing who were involved in the murder. Later, he came to know from witnesses and local people that Dipu, Sourav and Rana were not present at the spot when the murder took place.

He said that the IO of the case,

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 29		5-21 pm
Dec 30	6-40 am	
Prayer Timings		
Dec 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-27	5-32
Esha	7-30	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		