

# US, UK push for Iraq strike support

AFP, London

US and British hopes of winning a new UN resolution authorising military action on Iraq within upcoming weeks triggered a final round of diplomacy yesterday to sway reluctant allies and opponents.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair was expected to lead the charge after standing shoulder-to-shoulder with US President George W Bush late on Friday to tell Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that "time is running out".

Blair was notably expected to press for support from fellow permanent UN Security Council member France at an Anglo-French summit

on Tuesday.

Blair returned home from Washington yesterday sounding more hopeful of securing a second, politically crucial UN resolution to underpin a US-led military assault on Iraq.

"I believe there will be a second resolution," Blair told reporters on his flight back to London, where he was preparing this weekend for talks on Tuesday with French President Jacques Chirac, who is wary of waging war on Iraq.

"I think it's important to get this thing (the crisis over Iraq and weapons of mass destruction) resolved one way or another -- and I think it

will be very clear to people whether Saddam is cooperating or not in the next few weeks.

But, while Bush softened his stance to "welcome" the idea of a new resolution -- advocated by Blair, his closest ally -- he warned that "any attempt to drag the process on for months will be resisted by the United States".

He insisted that the military greenlight was already lit, saying a resolution on disarmament adopted November 8 "gives us the authority to move without any second resolution."

That mandate, UN Resolution 1441, threatens "serious conse-

quences" if Iraq fails to cooperate fully with UN inspections aimed at finding and destroying suspected weapons of mass destruction.

Veto-wielding Security Council members China, France and Russia interpret 1441 to mean that a second resolution is needed before war, and say that the inspections still have some time to go.

Eight other non-permanent members, including Germany, which chairs the council this month, share that stance. That leaves only four members -- the United States, Britain, Spain and Bulgaria -- in favour of imminent war.

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PHOTO: STAR

The Gulistan Park has become a hangout for drug-peddlers (L) and vagabonds.

# Vanishing Gulistan Park

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

Gulistan Park, one of the last remaining green spots between the old and the new parts of the city, is virtually vanishing.

The 3.5-acre space, once attractive for its greenery, is now a shocking sight for many due to negligence of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Besides, the Mahanagar Natya Mancho (drama centre) in it also bears signs of poor maintenance.

The park situated beside one of the busiest road intersections in the city has virtually turned into a safe haven for drug addicts, muggers floating sexual workers, vagabonds and a host of similar elements.

Muggers use the park for sale of

mugged things and sexual workers gather there since the evening for clients. Drug addicts use the place to take phensidyl, marijuana and heroin. Hundreds of hawkers have virtually occupied the pavements around the park and transport owners and workers have set up makeshift union offices in it. Besides, there are a number of temporary restaurants.

As night falls, the park wears a different look with anti-social activities going on there.

A poorly maintained public toilet of the DCC and several illegal ones are destroying the usual features of the park. And destitute people are damaging the trees there to collect fuel wood and for other purposes.

It is alleged that many unscrupulous people use the drama

centre for holding 'obscene dances and fashion shows' in the name of staging drama. They present such dances at the intervals between sequences of a drama to attract audience, particularly young ones, an organiser said.

Political and other gatherings also take place at the drama centre. And illegal use of its water supply facilities goes on unchecked.

A number of vendors alleged that police personnel from a nearby police box regularly collect 'toll' from them. "On behalf of the police, a 'lineman' collects toll from each vendor every day," said the owner of a makeshift tea stall in the park.

From early morning to late in the night, the temporary restaurants prepare foods using burners

mainly for transport people and dump their waste haphazardly in the park.

So-called union offices inside the park allegedly collect toll from transport owners.

The illegal structures include a semi-pucca office of BNP's Gulistan unit. Materials of some DCC-demolished shops have remained piled up in the park since last month.

When contacted, Executive Engineer of the DCC region four Bazlur Rashid said they have 10 gardeners and a supervisor for the park.

But none of them were found there during repeated visits to the spot.



PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia flips through a dictionary at a stall after inaugurating the month-long Ekushey Book Fair at the Bangla Academy yesterday.

# MiG purchase scam case Hasina to seek bail today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, accused in the MiG-29 Purchase Scam Case, will appear in the Special Court for Dhaka Division today for bail, sources said.

She will appear in the court at about 10.30 am.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) submitted a charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM's) Court, Dhaka, on January 29 against Hasina and six others.

The CMM's Court then sent the case to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka for trial.

The Sessions Court on Thursday

took the charge sheet into cognizance and transferred it to the Special Court for its disposal.

In the case filed with Tejgaon police station on December 11, 2001, it was alleged that Sheikh Hasina along with four top defence officials caused the public exchequer count Tk 700 crore (\$123 million) in loss in the purchase of eight MiG-29 fighter jets.

The six others are former Air Force chief Jamaluddin Ahmed, former defence secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain, former Army chief Mustafizur Rahman, Air Commodore (ret'd) Mirza Akhter

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# Disarming Iraq US must not defy UN, seminar told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US should go by the UN resolutions to disarm Iraq and recall the troops if the Security Council decides against the war.

Former ambassador and ex-vice-chancellor of North South University Muslehuddin Ahmed observed this while giving his keynote address on "The Quest for Peace in Iraq" yesterday at the National Press Club.

The Bangladesh chapter of the South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) organised the lecture session, which was presided over by Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Professor Rehman Sobhan.

In his keynote paper, Muslehuddin said the US must not defy the UN and the international will in order to stop Iraqi President Saddam Hossain.

"Dislodging of one man is certainly not worth the terrible sacrifice that the US and the world have to make," he said.

The simple order of President George W. Bush regarding war would kill men, women and children, and devastate Iraq and other countries, he warned.

The US president should also seriously consider the danger to the lives of his own men and women in uniform and lives of the innocent Americans who will surely be targets of attacks in and outside America in the event of a war.

Muslehuddin said information provided by some officials of the Bush administration reportedly revealed that the evidences of Iraq deceit about weapons of mass destruction, which US Secretary of State Collin Powell would produce on February 5 in the Security

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# WTO rules to take toll on farming Green activists claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some aspects of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement are feared to raise the cost of farm output and curb farmers' rights in developing countries including Bangladesh from January 2006 when it takes affect.

Because, the WTO agreements on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIP) would enable the inventing organisations or companies to prevent farmers of Bangladesh and other least developed countries from using part of their harvest as seeds, speakers at a regional workshop held in the city yesterday apprehended.

The rued that even in such a context the government has very few policies and legislative preparation in place to protect the age-old traditional economic sectors like agriculture.

The government should persistently advise the farmers and other traditional livelihood earners to help protect their rights, observed the speakers at the two-day workshop on "Protecting Farmers rights: Issues and options".

Intellectual property rights experts and environmentalists from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are participating in the workshop. The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) in collaboration with the South Asian Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), the Ministry of Environment, UNDP and Ford Foundation arranged it.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury inaugurated the workshop while State Minister for Forest and Environment Jafrul Islam

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PHOTO: STAR

Residents of the Firingibazar area in Chittagong carry a black banner during a mourning procession yesterday for the young cricketers killed in road mishap Thursday midnight.

# JS session resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill on the controversial Joint Drive Indemnity Ordinance, 2003 could be tabled today when the winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad resumes at 4:15pm after a six-day recess.

The session that began on January 26 was adjourned after President Iajuddin Ahmed's address.

Officials at the parliament secretariat yesterday confirmed inclusion of the bill in today's agenda. The treasury bench moved the bill on the opening day of the current session.

The president promulgated the ordinance on January 9, indemnifying all killings and tortures during the anti-crime drive. At least 44 people died and hundreds were

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PHOTO: STAR

The mother of Moushumi, a 13-year-old girl who was abducted at Gulistan yesterday, cries in despair while one of the kidnapers sits on a police van floor.

# JS committees after Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP-led alliance plans to form 41 parliamentary standing committees unilaterally after the Eid-ul-Azha recess of the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Highly placed sources said the government has 'almost finalised' composition of the committees which are considered as 'watch dog' on the activities of ministries under the parliamentary system.

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will sit with party policymakers soon to approve chairmen and members of four more standing committees. Earlier last month, she had approved those of 37 committees.

The bodies are being formed over a year after the eighth parliament came into being.

The sources said the government would follow the previous Awami League (AL) rulers' practice in this regard and thus chairman of any standing committee would not be from the main opposition (AL).

However, a move to offer the post of chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina is still being considered within the ruling

party.

Many of the ruling party leaders think this would make the parliament more effective and also enhance the government's image both at home and abroad. But it was not known if the prime minister would agree to this, the sources said.

Although the parties in parliament had agreed to share membership of each of the standing committees in proportion to their strength in the House, neither the BNP nor the AL followed this since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991. Moreover, chairmen of all the committees were from the majority party in the House since then.

The BNP with 113 seats in the last parliament had pressed for proportionate share of chairmen and members of the committees, but the then ruling AL ignored it.

However, this time the AL is demanding proportionate share of chairmen of the committees before nominating their members for the bodies.

But the treasury bench now prefers to follow the then ruling AL's

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# Janatar Mancha Case Accused asked to appear in court March 15

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday directed former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and seven others, accused in seditious case (Janatar Mancha Case), to appear before it on March 15.

Judge Hossain Shahid Ahmad issued the order after the case was placed before him.

The Investigation Officer (IO) of the case submitted a charge sheet against Dr Alamgir and seven others on December 26 last year.

The seven others are former home secretary and incumbent

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