

Songs and poems animate anti-war protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to protest the possible US-led attack on Iraq.

They carried anti-war banners and placards to a rally that started at 3:00pm and shouted slogans against the US push for war.

Protestors sang and recited anti-war poems.

"To save humans and civilisation from the rages of war, all war criminals must be brought to trial," reads a placard carried by seven-year-old Shafik.

Shafik is among many others his age. It was a rally of people of all ages and from all walks of life.

A group of protestors dubbed US President George W Bush a war criminal and demanded trial of all war criminals.

The demonstrators paraded down streets and ended their anti-war programme after another rally at the Paltan Maidan, later in the day.

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Anti-war rally in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 'National Committee against Aggression' has called a public meeting to protest the US aggression on Iraq.

With the slogan 'Peace not War', the public meeting will be held today at Paltan Maidan at 3:00pm.

Professor M A Mazed, Justice Mohammed Abdur Rouf, SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Processionists parade down streets in Dhaka yesterday, protesting the possible US-led attack on Iraq. An anti-war rally will be held at Paltan Maidan this evening.

Dhaka, Yangon plan trade expansion

Khaleda visits Myanmar March 19

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Bangladesh and Myanmar will set up a joint trade commission during Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Yangon this month.

A foreign ministerial joint commission will also be set up to oversee bilateral relations.

The two neighbours will pen agreements to introduce "ac-

counts trade" and coastal shipping links to boost trade, according to foreign ministry sources.

Thailand will later be included in the shipping deal, making it a tripartite arrangement, they said.

Khaleda is expected to leave Dhaka for Yangon on March 19 on an invitation from Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar Than Shew.

Details of the visit are being worked out, foreign office sources said.

Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and other high government officials are expected to accompany the PM.

It was not known whether any agreement on repatriation of the Rohingya refugees will be signed.

Foreign office sources said Myanmar has assured that the refugees would be taken back after identity verification.

Both sides are optimistic that the issue would be resolved soon, a highly placed source at the foreign office said.

The two neighbours will also change the existing border trade

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Sparks fly at OIC summit, Iraq strikes defiant tone

AFP, Doha

Sparks flew at an emergency Islamic summit yesterday, with Iraq's number two Ezzat Ibrahim branding Kuwait's junior foreign minister a 'monkey' and vowing to teach the United States a lesson it would never forget.

Kuwait's Sheikh Mohammad Sabah al-Sabah rose to interrupt Ibrahim after the vice president of Iraq's Revolution Command Council accused Kuwaiti leaders of 'plotting with Zionism against Iraq.'

The Iraqi unleashed a volley of abuse. 'You are small, a valet and a monkey,' he charged.

'Shut up,' Sheikh Mohammad lashed back, prompting an appeal for calm and decorum from the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, whose country is the current head of the 57-nation

Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in 1990 and was finally driven out of the emirate by a US-led military coalition in 1991.

Yesterday's nasty exchange marked an ominous start to a special OIC gathering called here to forge a unified Islamic response to US threats to invade and occupy Iraq.

But only a handful of Islamic heads of state or government, notably President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed, turned up for the one-day session, with most delegations represented by senior officials.

Organisers said they hoped to arrive at a resolution opposing any US or British assault on Iraq while appealing to Baghdad to respect United Nations disarmament

demands.

Sheikh Hamad in an opening address underlined the 'exceptional circumstances' prevailing in the region and recognised that Muslims do not 'have the international political or strategic decisions that direct and command these developments.'

'Yet we can certainly influence the course of these developments.'

He said the goal of the OIC should be to help 'Iraq get out of this crisis in such a way that spares it and us a costly price or irremediable grave damage.'

The summit comes as the United States and Britain mass nearly 300,000 troops in the region and are

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Enamul freed, alleges police torture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After 82 days of detention, journalist Enamul Haque Chowdhury was finally freed from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

One of his colleagues received him at the jail gate at 8.00am and

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Dinkal tops govt ad list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dainik Dinkal topped the list followed by the Inquilab in getting government advertisements through the Department of Films and Publications (DFP), according to an analysis of the advertisement chart flow of the last six months.

The Ittefaq is in the third position in the list followed by Sangram, Manabjami, Jugantor, Observer, Bhorat Dak, Ajker Protasha, Dhakar Dak, Bhorat Kagoj, Nawroz, Good Morning, Shakti, Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and two regional newspapers published from

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Bill for energy regulatory body placed in JS

AL smells gas export bid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government introduced a bill in the parliament yesterday proposing formation of an independent energy regulatory commission.

While the government termed it a revolutionary move to reform

the energy sector, the main opposition Awami League smells a gas export plan in it.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharrif tabled the bill styled 'Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Bill, 2003.'

Piloting the bill, the minister said the commission would be an independent one and will regulate the energy sector.

But opposition chief whip Abdus Shahid said it was designed to prepare the ground for exporting gas.

"Since the provisions of the bill allow government interference, how the commission would work independently," Shahid asked while briefing newsmen after the

STATEMENT

BB autonomy proposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill was tabled in parliament yesterday to give autonomy to the central bank and form a monetary and fiscal policy coordination council.

Two other bills were also placed in the House to empower the Bangladesh Bank and bring reforms to the banking sector.

State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain introduced the bills.

Several Awami League lawmakers objected to the bills. They described the bills as money bills

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No end to mosquito menace in sight

Mayor fails to comply with Bhuiyan's directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka dwellers will have no let-up from mosquito assault soon as the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is too slow to take action.

The DCC claims that it is spraying larvicides and adulticides. But its action is too inadequate or absent in many areas to control culex mosquitoes.

And Mayor Sadeque Hossain

Khoka has failed to live up to the wish of LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan who told the mayor on January 7 to eradicate mosquitoes 'within 15 days'.

For the last one month or so, the DCC has been planning aerial spray from helicopter.

But no one can say when it will start.

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Fire guts two slums; child, woman die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A child and a woman were burnt to death in a fire at a Madhubagan slum in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead are Mohammad Rajib, 9, and Momtaj Begum, 75.

Originating from a mosquito coil, the fire gutted 20 shanties at around 12:10am.

Three fire fighting units rushed to the site and brought the fire under control after about 45 minutes.

In another fire, more than 500 shanties were gutted at

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