

## Protest against Iraq war rages in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protests against the US invasion of Iraq continued in the city yesterday.

People from all sections of the society spontaneously joined protests by different organisations and institutions, which formed human chains, staged rallies and brought out processions demanding an immediate halt to the aggression.

Carrying placards bearing slogans like 'No blood for Oil', 'Stop Killing Women and Children', students and teachers of Dhaka Women College formed a human chain at Uttara protesting the invasion.

Bangladesh Health Education Society brought out a procession from Mohakhali and marched towards the US embassy. As police intercepted the procession at Mohakhali, its members formed a human chain and held a rally there.

Among others, Society President Prof. Khursida Khanam and Vice-president Dr CM Dilwar Hossain addressed the rally, joined by hundreds of people.

The Platform Against Imperialist US War On Iraq, a newly formed body of political parties and cultural organisations, held a rally demanding immediate end to the aggression.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Monjurul Hsan Khan, president of Bangladesh Communist Party, Rashed Khan Menon, general secretary of Workers Party, Mainuddin Khan Badal, leader of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Md Mohan, a cultural activist. They called upon the people to build up a strong anti-war movement in the country.

They said the US and Britain have attacked Iraq for looting its oil and gas. They are enemies of civilization, the speakers said.

Bangladesh Health and Environment Journalists Network (BHEJNET) expressed grave concern over the indiscriminate bombing in Iraq.

Its president Abdur Rahman Khan and general secretary Abdul Mannan in a statement said the bombing is killing civilians and causing an environmental disaster in Iraq and demanded an immediate end to the aggression.

## JCD activists beat up BCL leader on DU campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A central leader of Bangladesh Chhtrra League (BCL) was seriously injured as a group of Jatiyatubadi Chhtrra Dal (JCD) activists beat up him on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Sheikh Rezaul Islam Reza, a BCL central committee member, was first admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and then shifted to a private clinic as his condition deteriorated.

JCD sources said Reza was beaten up for teasing a female student.

BCL instantly brought out a procession protesting the attack.

President of DU unit of the student body Delwar Hossain demanded action against those involved in the incident by this evening. He said they would go for a strike at the DU tomorrow if the authorities do not respond to their demand.

Condemning the incident, BCL President Sikder however said they would demonstrate on the DU campus tomorrow, protesting it.

Meanwhile, JCD's DU unit President Amirul Islam Khan Alim and General Secretary Hasan Mamun denied involvement of any JCD activist in yesterday's incident. BCL is making such allegations as part of a 'conspiracy' to destroy the peaceful academic atmosphere on the campus, they said.

DU Proctor ASM Atikur Rahman said he has not received any written complaint in this regard. "We cannot take any action against any body without a written complaint."

## Traffic snarl

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But an army officer said the decision was taken unilaterally by the RHD.

Earlier, the cantonment road was opened for small vehicles from 7 am to 8:30 pm to reduce traffic load on the Airport Road when construction of the Mohakhali fly-over began last year.

RHD officials said they have already made correspondence with cantonment authorities to allow vehicles from 7 am to 8:30 pm as before.



Women activists, left, of a religious organisation stage an anti-war demonstration and members of the Bangladesh Economic Association march in protest against the US-led invasion of Iraq in Dhaka yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

## PBCP armed cadre held with arms in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Shaikh Shaheen, 30, an armed cadre of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), was arrested from his hideout at Kartikkul area under Daulatpur police station at midnight on Tuesday.

Police also recovered a sawn-off rifle and six live cartridges from his possession.

Police said Shaheen is a listed criminal and wanted in seven murder cases.

According to OC of Daulatpur police station, the outlaw is a suspect in Daik Purbanchal Crime Reporter Shaikh Haroon-ar-Rashid murder case.

He was sent to district jail yesterday.

## UN must lead Iraq's post-war rehabilitation, says Schroeder

AFP, Berlin

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said yesterday that the United Nations must lead the post-war rehabilitation of Iraq despite bitter differences over the conflict.

In a keynote speech to parliament, he admitted that while Germany had been fiercely opposed to the US-led military action and still believed it was the "wrong decision" to take, "we were not able to prevent this war."

Berlin would stand by its promise not to take any part in the campaign, he went on, but would fulfil its NATO commitments, including granting US forces overflight rights and unfettered access to bases here.

Schroeder also said he hoped the war would be over as soon as possible and that "with the overthrow of the dictatorship, the Iraqi people will be able to realise its dream of a life in peace, freedom and self-determination." "The United Nations has to play the central role in shaping Iraq's future and the political reorganisation of the country after the war," he added.

## Killing of civilians

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Chowdhury also said Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign country takes decisions considering national interest and this should be respected by all.

He did not say anything specific about Dhaka's position on the post-Saddam government in Baghdad, as there are reports that it would be an Anglo-American sponsored government there after the war.

"This is a matter of future. Wait and see, let the war end," he said.

However, he said Dhaka will join post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation work in Iraq under internationally agreed arrangements and UN sponsorship.

"Like Afghanistan, we are ready to take part in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-ravaged Iraq under UN umbrella," Chowdhury said.

About dispatching humanitarian aid for Iraqi civilians from Bangladesh, he said the authorities concerned were discussing immediate requirements with the Red Crescent Society. The government committed to send emergency aid worth two million US dollars.

He said he is not aware if any Bangladeshi had gone to Iraq to fight the US-led forces.

About the economic impact of the war on Bangladesh, he said, "As of today (Thursday), there has not been any negative impact on remittance or (export of) manpower."

On the Indo-Bangladesh secretary-level meeting in Dhaka this week, he said the two sides were working on setting a convenient date for the proposed meeting.

## Pincer closes to six miles

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like they are using big bombs, they are really causing a shudder," she said.

As the war entered its third week, Baghdad and its outskirts had been heavily bombed overnight. The Iraqi information minister accused U.S. forces of killing 14 people with cluster bombs.

US special forces raided a palace used by President Saddam Hussein 90 kilometres outside of Baghdad, capturing no regime officials but seizing documents, a senior US commander said yesterday.

The latest advances followed an abrupt punch forward on Wednesday, when U.S. forces surged past the towns of Karbala and Kut and captured key bridges over the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, preparing the way for an assault on Saddam's stronghold.

US military claimed to have "effectively destroyed" two of the six Republican Guard divisions guarding Baghdad. Iraq denied this, saying morale was high.

**Kurdish advance repelled**  
In northern Iraq, Kurdish fighters, backed by small groups of US soldiers, advanced toward the northern oil town of Mosul on Thursday but were met by heavy machinegun and rifle fire.

Iraqi troops were firing mortar rounds at the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, who had taken cover by the roadside.

**Smart bombs on Baghdad**  
Early yesterday, US planes pounded targets around Baghdad, continuing a relentless campaign of air strikes.

"It was one of the worst nights of bombing so far in Baghdad and on the outskirts. There was the sound of warplanes all night," said Reuters correspondent Nadim Laddi.

US war headquarters in Qatar said planes dropped almost 40 "smart bombs" overnight on just one military storage facility in the Karkh district of Baghdad.

US forces would like to avoid street fighting in Baghdad, which might take a heavy toll in military and civilian casualties. But planners believe this prospect is increasingly likely as Saddam prepares to stage his last stand in the city.

**Frontline situation**  
Reuters correspondent Sean Maguire said U.S. forces bombarded Kut on the Tigris, about 105 miles south of Baghdad, yesterday, consolidating their hold on the area.

Further south, US troops edged forward in the Shi'ite Muslim holy city of Najaf, searching for paramilitary

Fedayeen fighters, and tightened their grip on Nassiriyah, where they appeared to fully control bridges over the Euphrates.

In the far south, British forces surrounding Iraq's second city of Basra edged into the outskirts early yesterday, capturing an industrial complex where Iraqi militia had spearheaded fierce resistance.

## Hornet

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downing of a Black Hawk helicopter.

Sixteen US soldiers are believed to be missing in action, with seven others being held as prisoners of war.

Meanwhile, two planeloads of injured British service personnel flew into Edinburgh airport yesterday.

Britain says it has suffered 27 dead. Official figures usually lag behind battlefield casualties.

In the early hours of yesterday, the Iraqis launched a counter-attack to try to recapture a key bridge south of Baghdad, but were repulsed, said US officials.

Some 500 Iraqis were killed in fighting for the bridge over the Euphrates river, 30km from Baghdad, said a US intelligence officer.

## Amazing maize record

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Elahi said over the past few years, the districts of Chuadanga and Meherpur, and Dhunat and Sherpur thanas in Bogra, Biral and Ghoraghat in Dinajpur and Hatibandha and Patgram thanas in Lalmonirhat witnessed proliferation of maize cultivation. One salient feature of its many advantages is that maize could be grown both in Rabi (November 1 to mid-December) and Kharif (Mid-February to end-March) seasons, he added.

"Production of maize has shown good results in the last two years. Maize has also gained popularity as a food side by side with the poultry feed. Public sector procurement of maize has been introduced like rice and wheat in order to encourage farmers in maize cultivation. The efforts for increasing area and production of maize will be strengthened," said National Agriculture Policy (NAP) of 1999.

According to the sources of Integrated Maize Development Project (IMDP), the annual requirement of maize in the country is as high as one million metric tons of which 900,000

tons of maize is used by the poultry farms of the country.

Sources said, both public and private sectors as well as some NGOs have come up in big ways for promotion of maize cultivation in Bangladesh. For example, they said, BRAC, Syngenta, Grameen Krishi Foundation and the state-run BADC were now in maize seed business.

So far, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) has developed as many as 12 maize seed varieties, four of which are hybrid varieties. These are: Barnali, Shuvra, Khoi Bhutta (topcorn), Mohor, BARI Maize-5, BARI Maize-6, BARI Maize-7, BARI Mishti Bhatta-1 (sweet corn), BARI Hybrid Bhatta-1, BARI Hybrid Maize-2, BARI Hybrid Maize-3, and BARI Topcross Hybrid Maize-1.

Dr Md Saiful Alam Bhuiyan, Chief Scientific Officer at the Plant Breeding Division of BARI, told The Daily Star that taking seed resources from BARI, a private company called North Bangladesh Seed Company has been helping out maize growers in Bogra with quality maize seeds.

Other than BARI-released seeds, sources said, there are other high-quality imported maize hybrids now available in Bangladesh which include, Australian varieties, namely, Pacific-11, Pacific-60, Pacific-983 and Pacific-988.

Craig A Meisner, the CIMMYT Agronomist, mentioned that CIMMYT has introduced 'Whole Family Training Programme (WFTP)' on maize cultivation in the country. The salient feature of this training is to involve the adult male and female members of a family.

"Future for maize is quite good in Bangladesh," asserted Meisner informing that local entrepreneurs have even started showing interests in setting up commercial ventures for producing tortillas (corn bread). "We'll bring in three tortilla machines from Mexico soon," Meisner added.

Mentionably, maize is used mainly as poultry feed in Bangladesh though in many countries of the world including sub-Saharan Africa and South America, maize is consumed as a staple food.

## Wailing children

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burst indoors or bouncing off the roofs of the concrete huts to blow up later in the roadways.

Rahed Hakem remembers that it was 10.30am on Sunday when she was sitting in her home in Nadr, that she heard "the voice of explosions" and looked out of the door to see "the sky raining fire". She said the bomblets were a black-grey colour. Mohamed Moussa described the clusters of "little boxes" that fell out of the sky in the same village and thought they were silver-coloured. They fell like "small grapefruit," he said. "If it hadn't exploded and you touched it, it went off immediately," he said. "They exploded in the air and on the ground and we still have some in our home, unexploded."

Karima Mizler thought the bomblets had some kind of wires attached to them -- perhaps the metal "butterfly" that contains sets of the tiny cluster bombs and springs open to release them in showers.

Some victims died at once, mostly women and children, some of whose blackened, decomposing remains lay in the tiny charnel house mortuary at the back of the Hillah hospital. The teaching college received more than 200 wounded since Saturday night -- the 61 dead are only those who were brought to the hospital or who died during or after surgery, and many others are believed to have been buried in their home villages -- and, of these, doctors say about 80 per cent were civilians.

Soldiers there certainly were, at least 40 if these statistics are to be believed, and amid the foul clothing of the dead outside the mortuary door I found a khaki military belt and a combat jacket. But village men can also be soldiers and both they and their wives and daughters insisted there were no military installations around their homes. True or false? Who is to know if a tank or a missile launcher was positioned in a nearby field -- as they were along the highway north to Baghdad? But the Geneva Conventions demand protection for civilians even if they are intermingled with military personnel, and the use of cluster bombs in these villages -- even if aimed at military targets -- thus crosses the boundaries of international law.

So it was that 27-year-old Asil Yamin came to receive those awful round wounds in her back. And so five-year-old Zaman Abbas was hit in the legs and 48-year-old Samira Abdul-Hamza in the eyes, chest and legs. Her son Haidar, a 32-year-old soldier, said the containers which fell to the ground were white with some red and green sometimes painted on them. "It is like a grenade and they came into the houses," he said. "Some stayed on the land, others exploded."

Heartbreaking is the only word to describe 10-year-old Maryam Nasr and her five-year-old sister Hoda. Maryam has a patch over her right eye where a piece of bomblet embedded itself. She also had wounds to the stomach and thighs. I didn't realise that Hoda, standing by her sister's bed, was wounded until her mother carefully lifted the little girl's scarf and long hair to show a deep puncture in the right side of her head, just above her ear, congealed blood sticking to her hair but the wound still gently bleeding. Their mother described how she had been inside her home and heard an explosion and found her daughters lying in their own blood near the door. The little girls alternately smiled and hid when I took their pictures. In other wards, the hideously wounded would try to laugh, to show their bravery. It was a humbling experience.

The Iraqi authorities, of course, were all too ready to allow us journalists access to these patients. But there was no way these children and often uneducated parents could manufacture their stories of tragedy and pain. Nor could the Iraqis have faked the scene in Nadr village where the remains of the tiny bomblets littered the ground beside the scorch marks. A crew from Sky Television even managed to bring a set of bomblet shrapnel back to Baghdad from Nadr with them, the wicked little

metal balls that are intended to puncture the human body still locked into their frame like cough sweets in a metal sheath. They were of a black colour which glistened silver when held against the light.

Again, were the aircraft that dropped these terrible weapons American or British? The deputy administrator of the hospital and one of his doctors told a confused tale of military action around the city in recent days, of Apache helicopters that would disgorge special forces on the road to Karbala; one of their operations -- if the hospital personnel are to be believed -- went spectacularly wrong one night recently when militiamen forced them to retreat. Shortly afterwards, the cluster bomb raids began, although the villages that were targeted appear to have been on the other side of Hillah to the reported abortive American attack.

One thing was clear: there is no "front line" in the fighting around Babylon, that US forces strike into land around the Tigris river by air and then withdraw and Iraqi forces do much the same in the other direction. Only the Americans and British, of course, have air superiority -- indeed there is no evidence a single Iraqi aircraft has taken off since the start of the invasion -- so even the US and British officers back at Qatar headquarters can hardly claim the cluster bombs were dropped by Iraq.

The most recent raid occurred on Tuesday when 11 civilians were killed -- two of them women and three of them children -- in a village called Hindiyeah. A man sent to collect the corpses reported to the hospital the only living thing he found in the area was a hen. Iraqi bomb disposal officers were ordered into the villages yesterday afternoon to clear the unexploded ordnance.

Needless to say, it is not the first time cluster bombs have been used against civilians. During Israel's 1982 siege of west Beirut, its air force dropped cluster bomblets manufactured for the US Navy across several areas, especially in the Fakhani and Ouza districts, causing civilians ferocious and deep wounds identical to those I saw in Hillah yesterday. Angry at the misuse of their weapons, which are designed for use against exclusively military targets, the Reagan administration withheld a shipment of fighter-bombers for Israel -- then released a few weeks later and sent the aircraft anyway.

It is not easy to listen to Iraqi officials condemning the use of illegal weapons when the Iraqi air force has itself dropped poison gas on the Iranian army and on pro-Iranian Kurdish villages during the 1980-88 war against Iran. Outraged claims from Iraqi officials at the abuse of human rights sound like a bell with a very hollow ring. But something terrible happened around Hillah this week, something unforgivable and something contrary to international law. One hesitates, as I say, to talk of human rights in this land of torture but if the Americans and British don't watch out, they are likely to find themselves condemned for what they have always -- and rightly -- accused Iraq of: war crimes.

## Jobs

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done at the initiative of the state minister because the Ahmed is very close to him, the sources added.

Both the prime minister and president have approved the contractual appointment of the information officer and an official notification in this regard was issued on March 24.

A top bureaucrat said the government can give contractual appointment to a person, who is beyond 57 years of age -- which is also the age to retire -- if the person is very competent and indispensable.

Besides, the relevant ministry or department needs to properly follow the service rules and policy before recommending appointment of an individual on contract, he added.

## DHAKA TODAY

**Movie show**  
Academy Film Society will screen two American movies titled 'Good Morning' and 'Catch Me If You Can'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 3.30pm and 6.30pm.

**Film show**  
Bishwa Sahitya Kendra will screen a film titled 'Beauty and the Beast' directed by Jean Cocteau. Venue: Bishwa Sahitya Kendra auditorium. Time: 5.00pm.

**French film show**  
Alliance Francaise will screen a film titled 'Nikita' directed by Luc Besson. Venue: Alliance Francaise auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 10.30am and 6.00pm.

**Painting exhibition**  
The inaugural ceremony of a painting exhibition of Ranjit Das will be held. Venue: Shilpangan, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.30pm. The exhibition will remain open till April 15 from 10.00am to 8.00pm daily.

**Art exhibition**  
The opening function of the first art exhibition of MFA students of the

University of Development Alternative will be held. Venue: Zainul Gallery of the Institute of Fine Arts. Time: 3.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till April 10 from 2.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

**Digital exhibition**  
The inaugural ceremony of a solo digital painting exhibition of Masud Ul Alam will be held. He lives and works in New York. Venue: DRIK Gallery, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.30pm. The exhibition will remain open till April 8 from 3.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

**Comilla mela**  
A day-long Comilla Mela (fair), organised by Gemcon Food and Agricultural Products Ltd, will be inaugurated by Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain as chief guest. Venue: Meena Bazar, Dhanmondi. Time: 9.00am.

**Reunion**  
The re-union of Management Net, an organisation of the ex-students of 10th batches of Management Department of Dhaka University will be held. Venue: Business Studies Bhaban. Time: 10.00am.