

Iraq uranium charge

White House now points at CIA

REUTERS, Entebbe, Uganda

The White House pointed the finger at the US Central Intelligence Agency yesterday over a false accusation that Iraq tried to buy African uranium.

President George W Bush said his charge that Iraq tried to buy nuclear material from Africa was approved by his "intelligence services," and US national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said the specific wording was approved by the CIA.

But Rice said the White House "absolutely" had confidence in CIA

Director George Tenet, saying he had served "very well."

The White House acknowledged this week it had been a mistake to say Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had been trying to get African uranium because documents alleging a transaction between Iraq and Niger proved to have been forged.

Bush repeated he had been right to go to war against Saddam, but declined to answer a reporter's question as to how the erroneous statement made it into his State of the Union address in January.

I gave a speech to the nation that

was cleared by the intelligence services," Bush said in Uganda, where he was meeting President Yoweri Museveni as part of a five-nation African tour.

"It speaks in detail to the American people of the dangers posed by the Saddam Hussein regime. My government took the appropriate response to those dangers," he told reporters.

Reflecting an attempt by the White House to defend Bush against criticism that he misled the public, Rice earlier held a lengthy

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PHOTO: STAR

Wife of slain AL leader Abdus Samad Khan lies unconscious at their Pallabi residence yesterday.

Police to go e-savvy

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The government plans to introduce e-policing systems to five police stations of the capital to equip the technologically backward law-enforcement agency with modern Internet facility, sources said.

This will provide people with the opportunity to register cases electronically, replacing the need for physical presence at mostly unpleasant police stations.

In the first phase, five police stations -- Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Kafur, Tejgaon and Mirpur -- will be brought under e-policing. The system will be later introduced to other police stations as well.

Targeted police stations will have Internet connections and their own web sites. People will be able to file general diary (GD) and First Information Report (FIR) through the Internet, after which police will supply printed acknowledgement.

To reduce the hassle of record-keeping, databases for charge sheet or FIR will be developed.

A secret web-based database of criminals of particular areas under the police station will also be developed.

An electronic register will be developed to keep records and statistics of arrests, attendance

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2 robbers killed in mob beating in Sunamganj

UNB, Sylhet

Two robbers were killed and two others injured in mob beating at village Pahartali in Tahripur upazila of Sunamganj district on Thursday.

The dead were identified as Selimuddin alias Seilla, 35, and Abul Quasem Moula, 38.

Local sources said a gang of four robbers entered Bangladesh territory from India through Charagaon border at 9am and fired on the villagers after being challenged by them.

The villagers surrounded the robbers and beat them severely,

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Food aid on wane, import on rise

REAZ AHMAD

Food aid and import swung opposite ways in the just ended fiscal 2002-03, with the aid plummeting to a two-decade low and import surging to a post-1998 peak.

Quoting government statistics, food officials said the aid totalled 2.6 lakh tonnes in the last fiscal year, the lowest since 1981-82.

Food import surpassed 30 lakh tonnes in the last fiscal year, the

second highest in the last two decades. Only in fiscal 1998-99, 42 lakh tonnes were imported.

In fiscal 2001-02, food aid from bilateral and multilateral donors stood at five lakh tonnes and food import at 12 lakh tonnes.

Officials said the decline in food aid in the last fiscal year was mainly due to a drastic fall in food assistance from the US because of its 'other commitments'. Only 54,970 tonnes of US food were received last year, down from 1.7 lakh

tonnes in 2001-02.

The USAID on April 10 said droughts in southern and eastern Africa continued to attract widespread donor attention and considerable food aid.

In the last fiscal year, Bangladesh received relatively less food aid also from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) -- 1.18 lakh tonnes compared to 1.72 lakh

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Partial suspension on HPSP funds withdrawn

UNB, Dhaka

World Bank and pool financing development partners have withdrawn the partial suspension on their pooled funds for the Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP), said a World Bank press release here yesterday.

The fund suspension, imposed on May 2, 2003 due to project-related default, particularly in the areas of sectoral reforms, has been withdrawn with effect from July 4, 2003 based on their concurrence on the government's proposed alternative action plan for the health and population sector, said the release.

It said the government has

recently prepared a comprehensive plan of action to carry forward an alternative reform agenda to achieve the intended objectives for the health and population sector.

The bank and other pool financiers -- the European Commission, the Netherlands, SIDA and DFID -- have welcomed the alternative plan as a good basis to sustain external support to the sector.

The public sector financing accounts for just a third of the country's total health expenditure with the non-public sector playing an increasingly important role in the provision of health service.

In view of these realities, the

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Pirates prey on fishing boats in Meghna, Bay

AKTER FARUK SHAHIN, Barisal

Pirates in the Meghna river and its estuary have made fishing boats and trawlers their regular targets of extortion. They are now issuing 'security cards' against tolls extorted from the fishermen.

Non-compliance with the 'card system' invites great trouble for the fishermen. Pirates take away belongings and fishing boats from non-paying parties at gunpoint. At least 12 such incidents of piracy took place in the last week.

According to the fishermen and local people, at least five gangs of

pirates have established control over vast areas in the estuarine Meghna and the Bay. They have divided the waters into five zones.

In the past, they used to rob the fishermen of their fishing gears and trawlers and on most occasions left the fishermen unharmed, but the pirates have now changed their tactics.

Now a trawler has to obtain a card from one of the five groups on payment of Tk 50,000. The trawler having such a card is 'safe' from all

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
July 12		6-49 pm
July 13	5-19 am	

Prayer Timings		
July 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Clarification

The Inter-service Public Relations (ISPR) has contradicted part of a report, headlined 2 held with M-16 rifle. The Daily Star ran on July 6, 2003.

The back-page report said, "The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) arrested two persons with an M-16 rifle and 73 rounds of ammunition from Balshari under Naikhongchhori Friday."

The ISPR agreed that 73 rounds of ammunition were seized but said no M-16 rifle was found.