

BBC reporter defends Iraq story before British inquiry

AFP, London

A BBC journalist who claimed that London exaggerated the case for war in Iraq, leading to a political crisis for British Prime Minister Tony Blair, yesterday defended his controversial report before a judicial inquiry.

BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan read out interview notes backing his story in May, which claimed that the government "sexed-up" a dossier it published last September on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Gilligan was the star witness on the second day of the independent judicial inquiry in London headed by senior judge Brian Hutton into the apparent suicide of government weapons expert Dr David Kelly.

The probe was ordered by Blair, who has been falling in the polls and who is at risk of serious political damage if the investigation's find-

ings are negative.

The government's 50-page dossier included a headline-grabbing claim that Iraq could deploy chemical or biological weapons in as little as 45 minutes.

Gilligan, 34, told the inquiry he had three meetings with Kelly since 2001, and that during one encounter on May 22 this year the scientist had told him the dossier had been "transformed a week before publication to make it sexier".

Kelly said that most claims in the official dossier were based on two sources, but the 45-minute claim was based only on a single source, according to Gilligan.

The BBC reporter used a newspaper article earlier this year to claim Blair's key aide and media chief Alastair Campbell was the man responsible for ordering intelligence officers to beef up the dossier to

make the case for war on Iraq more compelling. The claims have been strongly denied by the government, and sparked a furious row between ministers and the British Broadcasting Corporation, the world's biggest state broadcaster.

Gilligan, defence correspondent for BBC radio's agenda-setting Today programme, was Tuesday asked if it was Kelly who first mentioned Campbell's name.

Gilligan told the inquiry: "It was him, he raised the subject of 45 minutes and he raised the subject of Campbell."

Kelly was found with a slit wrist near his home in Oxfordshire, southern England, on July 18.

His presumed suicide came after he was identified by the government as a probable "mole", and followed hostile questioning at a parliament

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MAGNATE ABDUCTION Citizens' body calls agitation programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Demanding immediate rescue of businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, the Chittagong Nagrik Forum announced a four-day agitation programme yesterday.

Nineteen days into the abduction on July 24, Jamal Uddin remains untraced.

The agitation programme includes a hunger strike at the Chittagong Press Club premises from 10:00am tomorrow, a human chain and siege to the Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner's office at Lalbagh at 3:00pm on Saturday.

The programme also includes meeting the prime minister and the home minister in Dhaka on August 17 and a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong on August 21.

At a press conference at Chittagong Press Club, the forum leaders also threatened to go for further agitation if Jamal Uddin was not rescued within August 21.

The forum leaders alleged that some dishonest officials in the

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PHOTO: STAR

Villi, a woman from India's Andhra Pradesh, yesterday narrates tales of horror she had undergone at the hands of goons at the South Asian Women's Court on Women and Children's Trafficking and HIV/AIDS at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

PSC decides not to cancel BCS test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A meeting of the Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday brushed aside the allegation of question papers leakage of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) preliminary test and said the test taken on August 8 would not be cancelled.

However, the agitating BCS examinees who formed a human chain on Dhaka University campus yesterday gave an ultimatum to the PSC to cancel the test by August 20 or face tougher programmes.

Yesterday's PSC meeting observed that questions of the test

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Hazari hiding in India?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Joynal Abedin Hazari, a former lawmaker of the Awami League (AL) from Feni and accused in at least 16 criminal cases, is reported to have been hiding in India for the last two years.

Of the cases, six are in the process of trial and 10 under investigation.

Since 1968, about 40 cases have been filed against Hazari and 24 of them floundered in the absence of plaintiffs or witnesses. Hazari, who hit the headlines for many criminal activities during the past AL regime, was awarded life imprisonment, along with one of his accomplices, in an arms case by a court at Feni on Sunday.

The joint forces raided Hazari's residence in the town in his absence

on August 17, 2001 during the tenure of the caretaker government and recovered a huge quantity of arms and ammunition. Hazari has since been absconding.

The District and Sessions Judge's Court, Comilla, is recording statements on a murder charge brought against Hazari. Cadres of Hazari killed Delwar Hossain, an official of Bakhrabazar Gas Field, at his Masterpara residence in 1987.

The case of torturing Tipu Sultan, a United News of Bangladesh (UNB) reporter, is now in the process of trial at the Additional District Magistrate's Court, Feni.

Hazari's men abducted Tipu on January 25, 2000, and beat him up with iron rods before dumping him for dead. Tipu had to undergo a series of surgeries at home and abroad.

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PM unhappy with progress in fisheries sector

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday regretted that officials concerned failed to achieve the desired success in the fisheries sector to bring about the 'silver revolution' she had called for a year ago.

Inaugurating "Fisheries Fortnight 2003" at Sarail in the district as part of this year's campaign, the PM asked the officials to question their conscience whether they had duly performed their duties over the last year.

"You have to be more responsible ... your job is for the country; you can't take it casually," she said.

The fisheries ministry and department will release fish fry in open water-bodies throughout the country during the fortnight-long programme that also includes

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Alleged drug peddler hacked to death in sleep

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man was hacked to death in sleep inside his residence at Khilbaritek in Badda yesterday.

A gang of ten stormed into the house of Jewel Hossain, son of Israfil Hossain, at about 5:00am and chopped different parts of his body indiscriminately with machete. They also severed the tendons of both his hands and legs.

He was declared dead soon after he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Mamata, the victim's wife, identified six of the group as Selim, Shamshu, Kalu, Robu, Boal Kalam and Mamun and filed a case with the

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Cantt board defies injunction, knocks down wall of Janakantha editor's wife's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Defying a High Court injunction, the Cantonment Board yesterday knocked down the boundary wall and took away construction materials from the house of Shamim A Khan, wife of the Dainik Janakantha Editor Atiquallah Khan Masud.

A team of 30 employees of the Cantonment Board led by Executive Officer Abdulla Al-Mamun cordoned off the house (No. 74) for one and a half hours, demolished the boundary and took away bricks and other construction materials.

A military police team led by Sergeant Alauddin and Subedar Shahjahan and another team of Kaful police led by Sub-Inspector Rajib also went there and forced

house, said she saw Sraboni, Anik and their mother in a rickshaw and Sraboni's aunt Lucky Begum in another rickshaw in Baidderbazaar Friday afternoon.

The relatives believe the three went to Lucky's residence at Shahjadpur in Gulshan, where the boy and the girl were killed and later dumped in the dustbin.

The relatives also suspect that Lucky, wife of Sayema's brother Mizanur Rahman, might have a hand in the killing as she was against Sayema's living with her children in her father's house at Baidderbazaar.

Their mother is still missing.

Their uncle, Habibur Rahman, identified them at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 4:00pm yesterday. The two and their mother, Sayema Akhter, were missing from Baidderbazaar residence since last Friday, he said.

Moghi, a domestic help at the

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GP plans free mobile internet for rural schools

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

GrameenPhone (GP) yesterday said it will provide mobile Internet service free of cost to 10,000 schools in rural areas.

The announcement came while Minister for Science and Information Communication Technology Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan was speaking as chief guest at the launch of the voice-based news and information service by the GP and Impress Telefilm, the owning partner of private satellite network Channel i.

Moyeen Khan said in his speech that his ministry was considering providing Internet facility in 10,000 schools.

"GP will provide data-fax enabled cards free of cost to the schools for Internet connection, if they are under GP's coverage area," GP's Director (Sales and Marketing) Mehbوب Chowdhury said.

Mehbوب said GP subscribers would be able to have latest news, daily events, bus schedule, horoscope, by dialling 2626 at Tk 2 per minute.

GP has launched Short Message Service (SMS) based 'push and pull' service for news, transport timetable and other value added services, he said.

Earlier, GP launched voice-based news updates in collaboration with The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo. This service was first in Asia. Even many developed European countries have

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Strangled children identified, their mother missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The boy and the girl whose bodies were found in a dustbin at Shahjadpur in Gulshan Monday were identified by their uncle yesterday.

Ten-year-old Sraboni Akhter and Anik Hamza, 8, were brother and sister who lived with their mother at their grandfather's house at Satbhajapara in Sonargaon, Narayanganj. Their father, Hafez Amanullah, is an Imam of a mosque in Chandina, Comilla.

Sraboni was a student of class two and Anik class one at Baidderbazaar Pre-Primary School in Sonargaon.

Their mother is still missing.

Their uncle, Habibur Rahman, identified them at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 4:00pm yesterday. The two and their mother, Sayema Akhter, were missing from Baidderbazaar residence since last Friday, he said.

Bodies of Sraboni and Anik recovered from the dustbin bore bruises. A gamchha was tied to the

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Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

The Rampura Road developed a snarl-up yesterday after the city witnessed heavy monsoon rain.

Three to die for killing schoolboy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Three persons were sentenced to death yesterday for killing a schoolboy.

The convicts are Shahjahan, 30, Chunu Miah, 29, and Masud Chowdhury, 27, of Fenchuganj upazila. Shahjahan and Chunu have been absconding since the murder.

Additional District and Sessions Judge-III of Sylhet S M Mujibur Rahman gave the verdict.

Three others were acquitted of charges.

On February 23, 1997, Abdul Wadud, a class-X student of Puranbazar Public Model High School of Fenchuganj, had a quarrel with Shahjahan over seating arrangement at a jatra show.

Rajshahi-Joydevpur rail link ready for inaugural

Only 1 of 3 proposed trains to service the route

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

A direct rail link between Rajshahi and Joydevpur through the Banchabandhu Jamanullah Multipurpose Bridge (BJMB) will be inaugurated in Rajshahi by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia tomorrow.

But only one of the three proposed inter-city trains will reportedly be running on the new railway linking the eastern and western parts of the country that railway officials said would help accelerate economic development of the northern region.

Rajshahi Protection Movement Council (RPMC) alleged that the decision to run just a single train was influenced by some Rajshahi-Dhaka coach owners including a top BNP leader.

"Introduction of the three trains will put bus owners under 'heavy competition' with the railway," he explained.

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