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US hands self-rule to Iraq

Path ahead strewn with obstacles, Western-style restrictions outrage Iraqis

AGENCIES, Baghdad
The U.S.-led coalition transferred sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government yesterday, two days earlier than expected in a surprise move that apparently caught insurgents off guard, averting a feared campaign of attacks to sabotage the highly symbolic step toward self-rule.
Legal documents transferring sovereignty were handed over by U.S. governor L. Paul Bremer to chief justice Midhat al-Mahmoud in a small ceremony attended by about a half dozen Iraqi and coalition officials in the heavily guarded Green Zone. Bremer took charge in Iraq about a year ago.
"This is a historical day," Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi said during the ceremony. "We feel we are capable of controlling the security situation."
Iraq will need to overcome numerous obstacles, including two nationwide elections and a constitutional referendum, before regaining full sovereignty and a democratic government at the end of next year or in 2006.



US Administrator in Iraq Paul Bremer, right, hands over legal documents to the head of the Iraqi Supreme Court, Midhat Mahmud, as Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi smiles during the power handover ceremony in Baghdad yesterday.

KHULNA EDITOR MURDER

10 suspects held, Balu laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna
Khulna police yesterday arrested 10 people on suspicion of having links to the murder of Press Club President Humayun Kabir Balu.
The arrested are Manik 25, Ismail 18, Abdul Hye 22, Feroze 18, Monirul 18, Jamal 25, Rabiul Gazi 18, Bashir Howlader 20, Afzal 18 and Saidul 27. Of them, four were identified as peanut vendors, four as rickshaw-pullers and the others as wanderers.
When asked, Officer-in-Charge Mosharaf Hossain said they have taken the arrestees into custody for questioning to extract possible leads to the killing.
Meanwhile, Sub Inspector of

Khulna Police Station Maruf Hossain has filed two separate first information reports (FIR) but named none as the accused.
Replying to a query, acting Police Commissioner Sajjad Ali said he was hoping for a significant breakthrough in the investigation that would lead to tracking down the real killers of Humayun Kabir Balu.
Stain editor of Dainik Jannabumi Humayun Kabir Balu was laid to rest at Basupara graveyard after Zohr prayer yesterday.
His first namaz-e-janjana was held at Shahid Hadis Park at 11:00am. Hundreds of people including Information Minister Shamsul

Mannan's profile

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Member Secretary of Bikalpa Dhara National Committee Major (retired) Abdul Mannan made his debut in politics in 1990 and in the following year he became a member of parliament from Dhaka-10 constituency defeating Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.
A three-time MP from the same constituency, Mannan was born in 1942 at his ancestral home in Noakhali. He had his schooling at Noakhali Zila School. After obtaining HSC degree from Feni College, he joined Pakistan Army. In 1962 he graduated from Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul as a commissioned officer.
After taking retirement from Bangladesh Army in 1974, Mannan went into trading business by setting up Azim Mannan Ltd. Later he

Uplift vow Falu's plank, AL help Mannan's hope

Campaign closes tonight, Bikalpa Dhara denied Karwan Bazar, Mukhtangan meeting venues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The two key rivals in July 1 by-polls in Dhaka-10 constituency were busy in last hours of electioneering yesterday before official ban on the campaign takes hold midnight tonight, 48 hours ahead of the voting.
The Bikalpa Dhara could not hold a planned public rally in Karwan Bazar or at Mukhtangan because of the authorities' non-cooperation, but the main opposition Awami League's (AL) commitment to launch a full-fledged cam-

US envoy for Bangla Bhai's arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
US Ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas yesterday condemned the Sunday murder of Khulna Press Club President Humayun Kabir Balu saying radicals including Bangla Bhai, religious and political extremists should be arrested immediately.
Thomas said, "Fundamentalist groups have killed Humayun Kabir Balu. Fundamentalists are killing journalists today, they might kill everyone tomorrow. Police should

EPZ TRADE UNIONISM

Pass law by June 30 or face US trade facility withdrawal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
US Ambassador Harry K Thomas yesterday warned Bangladesh of withdrawing either the GSP (generalised system of preferences) facility or export-import bank financing if it does not adhere to labour standards and allow trade unionism in its exclusive trade zones by the month-end.
"I have not seen this [draft] law passed in parliament. If it isn't passed by June 30 we have two options: withdraw the GSP or withdraw export-import bank financing," the US envoy said at a "Meet-the-Press" address titled "US-Bangladesh Relations", celebrating the golden jubilee of the National Press Club at its VIP lounge yesterday.
The cabinet on May 23 approved a draft law titled, "EPZ Workers Association and Industrial Relations Act, 2004" to allow limited trade unionism in the six exclusive trade zones.
Thomas said Dhaka made an agreement with Washington and other donors on May 10 to adhere to International Labour Organisation



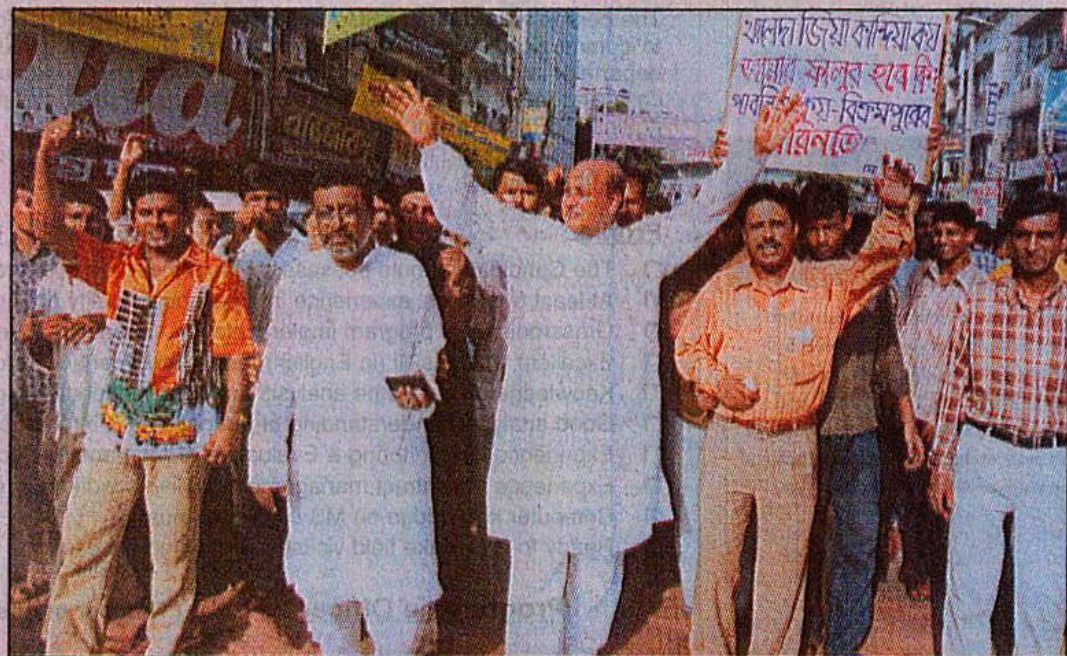
Harry K Thomas

Bangladesh.
Asked if there were any room for further negotiations, Thomas replied, "There is always room to extend the time, but not for six months, six years or 14 years like we have done before."
Bangladesh has enjoyed \$300 million in duty-free exports to the US market under the GSP facility since 1993, based on its commitment to adhere to the ILO standards and provide freedom of association in the EPZs. Washington has been pressing Dhaka to pass the workers' rights legislation since 1990.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Thomas also reiterated US concerns over the grave human trafficking situation in Bangladesh that may lead to sanctions on non-humanitarian and non-trade sectors.
"It [Bangladesh] failed to make significant efforts to prosecute traffickers and address the complexity of government officials in trafficking," Thomas said, explaining the placing of Bangladesh from Tier 2 to Tier 3 in the annual US report on "Trafficking in Persons Report for

18 die as truck spins off road at Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur
At least 18 people were killed, three of a family, and 22 injured as a truck spun off the road at Bagherbar under Sadar Upazila yesterday.
Of the dead, six were females, six males and six children. Five of them were identified as Rashida Khatun, 30, wife of Siddiqur Rahman, her daughter Rijia Khatun, 8, Masud, 13, and Somla Khatun, 9.
"Most of the victims were dayworkers travelling on top of the sand-laden truck," police.
The fatal accident occurred at

about 3:30pm when the Dhaka-bound truck from Balipara in Mymensingh hit a pothole on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and skidded off the roadside, killing 14 on the spot and injuring 25 others.
The injured were admitted to Gazipur Sadar Hospital and 17 of them were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where three succumbed to their injuries.
Among the injured are Dulal, Sohridul, Mofija, Urmila, Shahin, Ershad Ali, Kitab Ali, Kashed Ali, Jomshed, Soikat, Nuzrul, Masud,



Bikalpa Dhara candidate retired army major Abdul Mannan, left, waves to people on Bangabandhu Avenue in a gesture to swing votes and his key rival BNP-led alliance nominee Mosaddak Ali Falu, right, intensifies his campaign in Tejgaon yesterday in the final hours to the official ban on electioneering for Dhaka-10 by-polls on July 1.

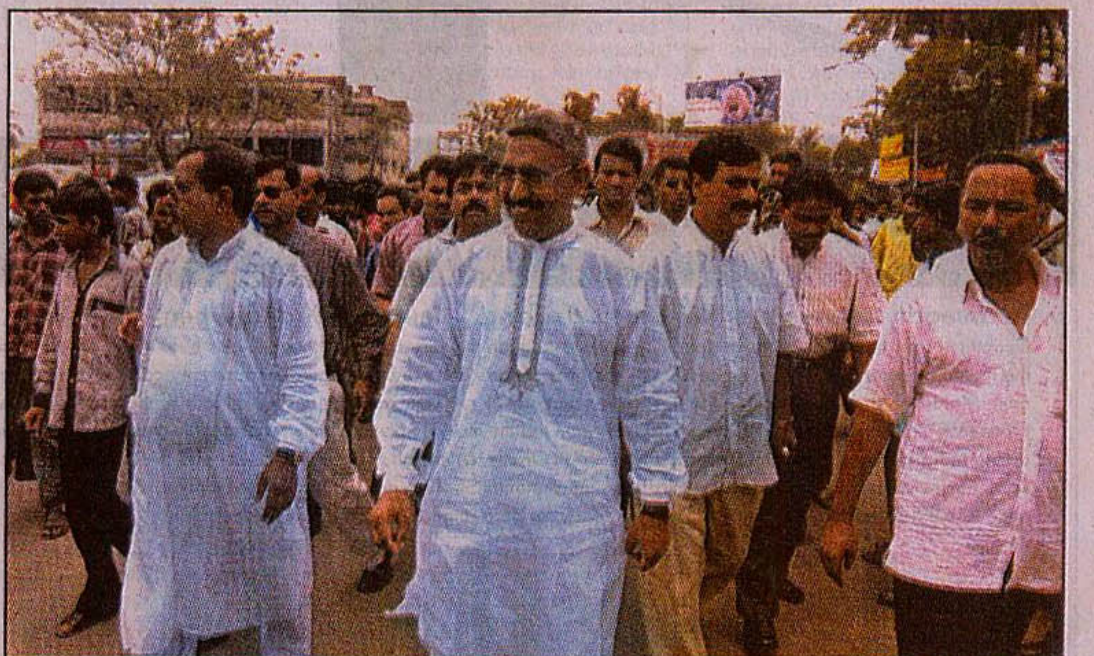


PHOTO STAR

Noab slates Balu killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) yesterday strongly condemned the murder of Khulna-based journalist Humayun Kabir Balu in a bomb attack.
In a press statement issued yesterday, Noab President Mahfiz Anam said, "We are shocked and horrified at the brutal murder of Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of Dainik Jannabumi, who was also president of Khulna press club."
"We condemn this heinous act and call upon the government to launch an urgent investigation to capture the killers. We extend our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family and pray to the Almighty for the salvation of the departed soul," it added.

Budget won't work unless crimes curbed: AL

Stop hartal for uplift: Treasury bench

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Senior ministers yesterday came down heavily on the main opposition Awami League (AL) in parliament accusing it of hindering development programmes through hartal and street agitation.
Refuting the accusation, AL lawmakers blamed the government for what they said was patronising criminals that led to a law and order downside.
"Taking part in the budget discussion in the House, Minister for Communications Nazmul Huda

demanding amendment to the constitution to ban hartal and street agitation for at least four years of a government's five-year tenure to allow uninterrupted development work.
AL adviser and former finance minister SAMS Kibria said law and order is deteriorating as the ruling alliance backs criminals and that this has led to a poor economic situation in the country.
"The budget will not bring any positive change in the socio-economic condition of people if law and order does not improve," said

Fundamentalists issue death warrant to 3 DU professors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Islamist zealots have issued death sentence to three noted professors of Dhaka University (DU) accusing them of running anti-Islamic propaganda in the country.
The three receiving death sentences are Prof Muntasir Mamun of history department, Prof Humayun Azad of Bangla department and Prof MM Akash of economics department.
The Nastik Murtad Resistance Committee and Muslim Millat Shariah Council yesterday in a faxed message sent their "verdict" to different print media offices in the

DHAKA-10 BY-POLLS

Govt rejects EC request for troops in each centre

High Court verdict on the issue likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The government has virtually rejected the Election Commission's (EC) request to deploy army in each polling centre in Dhaka-10 by-polls, making the EC to depend on a High Court (HC) verdict likely to be delivered today for the implementation of its order.
The home ministry on Sunday reviving an earlier circular informed the EC that two companies of army would be deployed in the constitu-

Bangla Bhai men abduct one more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi
Cadres of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) yesterday kidnapped one more person but hours later released him after taking an undertaking that he had never been tortured.
The kidnapped was identified as Azizar Rahman, president of Pramanikpara Zame Mosque at Raipura village in Bagmara.
Earlier in May JMJB cadres captured him and inflicted some gruesome tortures. Later they forced him to write a rejoinder against newspaper reports on the incident.
JMJB cadres also released the two women and a child they kidnapped on Saturday, but kept a gold