

# Bush for Iraq War architect to head WB

AP, Washington

President Bush chose Paul Wolfowitz on Wednesday to head the World Bank, selecting an architect of the Iraq war whose hard-line foreign policy stance as deputy defence secretary has made him a target of critics at home and abroad.

Bush called Wolfowitz "a compassionate, decent man who will do a fine job at the World Bank."

But international aid and other groups such as the Mobilization for Global Justice and Friends of the Earth as well as some Democrats on Capitol Hill voiced concerns about the president's choice to take the helm of the 184-national development bank. They say Wolfowitz, 61, lacks both the development credentials and collaborative management style needed for the job.

"I really believe in the mission of the bank, which is reducing poverty," Wolfowitz told The Associated Press in an interview. "It is a noble mission and a matter of enlightened self-interest."

The selection came on the heels of another Bush pick that has courted criticism: the nomination of John Bolton to be UN ambassador. Bolton, currently the State Department's arms control chief, has spoken dismissively of the United Nations.

Steve Clemons of the liberal New America Foundation, said the Wolfowitz pick demonstrates that "neoconservatism maintains a tenacious, tight grip on US foreign policy."

The Wolfowitz nomination which is subject to approval by the World

Bank's board could further strain US relations with Europe, where France and Germany were among the countries that vociferously opposed the US invasion of Iraq.

He said Wednesday that he recognised the need to smooth relations with European allies, saying, "I have a lot to listen to." If approved by the board, he said, "I will be an international civil servant responsible to that board."

Wolfowitz was among the most forceful Bush administration figures in arguing that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. A foreign policy hawk who believes the United States should use its superpower status to push for reforms in other nations, he also predicted Americans would be welcomed as liberators rather than occupiers once they toppled Saddam.

If approved by the bank board, Wolfowitz would replace World Bank President James Wolfensohn, who is stepping down June 1, the end of his second five-year term.

**SINGAPORE TRIP**

## Trade tops PM's agenda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves for Singapore on March 20 on a three-day official visit to the newly industrialised country with promotion of trade and investment high on her agenda.

Khaleda will have a tête-à-tête with Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on March 21 at Hotel Istana, preceding official talks when investment, trade and economic cooperation are likely to figure prominently.

The two sides may sign several accords.

Foreign Minister M Mosharraf Khan, among others, will accompany the prime minister. Her entourage will include a 14-member business delegation comprising leaders of apex trade bodies.

Khaleda will also call on the Singaporean president at Hotel Istana, attend a reception to her by Bangladeshi community in Singapore at Hotel

Swissotel Stamford and deliver a lecture at a seminar organised by the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at Suntec Convention Centre.

The prime minister is scheduled to return home on March 23.

**Pledge to abide**

FROM PAGE 20

the last week of this month.

The BSF delegation at the meeting also agreed to withdraw their camp at Bholanathpur in Khagrachari, set up on the zero line violating rules, BDR sources said.

The two sides discussed 18 common issues.

The meeting also decided to start a survey of the disputed 1,500 acres of land at Muhuri Char.

Our correspondent from Dinajpur reports: A sector commander-level meeting between the BDR and BSF at Atwari in Panchagarh district yesterday decided to work jointly to ease border tension and resolve the issues as per the border guidelines.

The BDR team raised the issues of BSF obstruction to the construction of a 160-metre embankment to protect Barshali village at Atwari from river erosion. BSF's push-in bid and erection of barbed wire fencing.

The two sides agreed that construction of the dam would start on March 20, sources said.

Killing of innocent Bangladeshis by BSF, smuggling, drugs and arms trafficking, intrusion of BSF men into Bangladesh territory and some other issues also came up at the meeting.

## Indigenous man abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Criminals on Wednesday abducted an indigenous person and demanded a ransom of Tk 10 lakh in Tarachha Noapara in Roangchhari upazila.

The family of Kaya Sa Ching, 30, said his captors contacted them and demanded the sum for his release.

Local sources said Ching is a former gunman of the Arakan Army, an armed militant group against the Myanmarese junta. They added that "CHT Group", a recently formed criminal outfit, abducted Ching for his refusal to join the organisation.

The same outfit kidnapped Hassan Mahmud Babul, manager of Bandarban Hillside Resorts, and Siddique Rahman, a retired army person, last year.

## Two more Islamist militants held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Two more activists of the banned Islamist outfit Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen were arrested from a mosque in Sudar upazila on Wednesday night, raising the number of Islamists arrested in the district to 17.

The two, Azadul, 20, and Sohel Rana, 28, both from village Deendaha, were nabbed from the village mosque while they were holding a secret meeting, police said.

Gaibandha police are carrying out a combing operation since last month to nab militants of the Islamist organisation led by Dr Asadullah al Galib, who has been arrested recently and is now in jail custody.

During the drive, police first arrested Habibur Rahman alias Jubayer and Raju Sarder from

Gaibandha town on February 19. Acting on their confession, police arrested the other 15.

Sources said Mujahideen activists went into hiding to escape the police operation but are now trying to reorganise themselves.

## Habiganj carnage probe

FROM PAGE 20

Asked whether they would reject the probe report, Reza told The Daily Star, "The question of rejection or acceptance doesn't arise here, as I've not seen the report. But we are affirming again that we won't accept any probe except one by the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation of the USA)."

Explaining the reason for the stance, Reza said, "We know for sure that the local investigators are not allowed to interrogate powerful individuals who might have been behind my father's killing."

He said they have no objection to local investigators or doubt about their competence, but the handicap is they are not allowed to work freely. "That's why we're demanding a FBI probe."

He, however, expressed his concern at the newspaper reports that the investigators failed to identify the masterminds behind the attack.

Reza said the probe report has implicated eight Habiganj BNP men in the attack. But, "Habiganj BNP doesn't run independently. Powerful leaders of the greater Sylhet region and the central leaders ultimately control operations of the grassroots units," he said. "But the roles of these higher level leaders [in the incident] have not been revealed [in the report]."

Talking to The Daily Star last

## PBCP demands Tk 2 lakh from KU pro-VC

Threatens with death for failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party's (PBCP) Janajuddho faction on Wednesday threatened the pro-vice-chancellor of Khulna University with death if he failed to give the outfit Tk 2 lakh by Sunday.

In a hand-written letter sent to Pro-VC Dr Syed Jabid Hossain by post, the PBCP has fixed March 26 to "liquidate" him if he did not give the toll.

The letter, sent from Khulna City Post Office, bears no name but designation of the outfit's regional leader.

KU Section Officer Syed Mizanur Rahman asked Khulna Metropolitan Police to take necessary security measures for Prof Jabid, also the acting VC, as the VC has resigned.

The pro-VC was not available for comments, as he is now in Rajshahi to visit his ailing wife, according to the section officer.

## Worker hurt as bomb near central jail goes off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bomb kept beside the wall of Dhaka Central Jail went off yesterday injuring a construction worker.

The wounded construction worker Mobarak Hossain, who is now under treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said he was cleaning the boundary wall of the jail at 2:45pm when the blast occurred.

"The shovel I was working with fell from my hand on a pile of garbage below and I saw a flash of light as it went off with a big bang," he told The Daily Star.

Mobarak was wounded in the face, throat, chest and waist.

In another incident at Tejgaon yesterday, a crane operator died as the base of the crane he was working on split apart.

Abul Hossain, 32, was lifting goods to the 12th floor of the Rangs Bhaban at 9:30pm when the crane's base split and he fell to the ground dying on the spot.

## Move to request

FROM PAGE 1

"The news is completely false and question does not arise at all to write any letter to any country to withdraw their envoys. No such meeting of policymakers was held as reported in newspapers," a high official of the PMO told The Daily Star yesterday.

The PMO is rather investigating who might be behind spreading such false news to the press, he said adding that it would have been wise of the newspapers before carrying such a sensitive item to check with the concerned authorities of the PMO and the foreign minister on the matter.

Another reliable source at the PMO said they had already come to know that an official of the Prime Minister's Press Wing briefed a few reporters on Wednesday but nobody knows who asked the press to "feed" the PMO told The Daily Star yesterday.

Talking to newsmen at the police station yesterday morning, Yakub pleaded not guilty although police identified him as an arms peddler and smuggler.

The accused hinted that a good lead to the case will be found if it is looked into how the crane used to handle the arms and ammo was taken to the CUFL jetty and who took it there.

He also said he was thinking of surrendering to the Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on March 22 during a scheduled hearing of the case.

Meanwhile, talking to The Daily Star yesterday several policymakers of the ruling BNP said they knew nothing about such a meeting taking place.

Top officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also expressed surprise over the issue and said they checked the authenticity of the report with the concerned government authorities, but found it baseless.

## Loan recovery

FROM PAGE 1

cases, the loan recovery has been stumbling as most of the private defaulters obtained High Court injunctions against the bank's actions.

Side by side, the government defaulters organisations have been deliberately going slow in paying back their loans.

As a result, the bank could recover only Tk 5 lakh from the private defaulters and Tk 37 lakh from the government entities last year.

Among the government defaulters, Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation accounts for Tk 134 crore, followed by Khulna Newsprint Mills (Tk 74 crore) and Dockyard and Engineering Works (Tk 30 crore).

"We regularly remind them to pay back the loans," said a Sonali Bank official. "But there has been no progress."

A finance ministry official said the government is pursuing reforms in the Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) like Sonali. "Under the reforms, we will take steps to pay back the loans defaulted by government entities."

He said the government is considering a plan to release bonds in the market to raise money from the public and use that to settle the default loan issue.

An official list of private defaulters of Sonali Bank puts Saleh Carpet as the top private defaulter (Tk 76 crore), followed by Lina Textiles (Tk 67 crore) and Deshna Shoe Industries (Tk 60 crore). Then come Sonali Cotton Mills (Tk 53 crore), Globe Metal Complex (Tk 50 crore), Dhaka Vegetable Oil Industries (Tk 50 crore), Zarina Carpet Mills (Tk 50 crore) and Riverside Leather and Foot Industries Ltd (Tk 28 crore).

Majid said, "As the plaintiff, I've the right to know about the progress of investigation into my cases. But the probe authorities are yet to inform me any thing. Whenever I inquired about it, the investigators told me to wait, saying the probe was on and they were hopeful to track down the criminals."

He was also for the government to make the probe report public.

## AL won't go to polls

FROM PAGE 1

"We want to make it clear that Awami League will not participate in any 'stage-managed election' and will resist government attempt to hold election without reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil.

He was addressing a discussion organised to mark the 86th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman. The discussion held in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban in Dhanmondi was presided over by AL President Member Zillur Rahman.

Jalil said that besides the reforms, it must be ensured that the next chief election commissioner and other commissioners are acceptable to all.

The ruling BNP-Jamaat government is planning to 'manoeuvre' the next elections, but people will never bear with this, he added.

On prime minister's refusal to make constitutional amendments in the caretaker government system, Jalil said that the constitution is no Quran or Bible that it cannot be amended. Every country amends its constitution to deal with the changing social and political circumstances.

Referring to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's speech in Parliament Tuesday, he said the alliance government is conspiring to make Bangladesh a friendless country.

AL senior leader Zillur Rahman said not only AL, rather all the opposition parties and professional bodies are in favour of reforms in the caretaker government system.

"Taking responsibility of my position in the party, I want to make it clear that Awami League will not contest any election unless necessary reforms take place," he said adding that they would not allow the government to hold any election with AL on the sidelines either.

AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain taking part in the discussion said that Khaleda Zia in the past did not want to accept the caretaker government system, but eventually had to give in, and she would again have to meet the opposition demand.

He said that the government has extended the retirement age of justice so that they can have a person loyal to BNP as the head of the interim government.

Surajit Sengupta said, "BNP and Jamaat are scared of reforms as they already know that people will reject them in the next elections for their sheer failure to deliver."

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Mohammad Hanif and Nurul Islam, co-ordinator of the Left-11 Party alliance, spoke at the discussion.

Party insiders said that AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the decision-making body of the party, will meet this morning at the party's Dhanmondi office to discuss the latest political developments.

## Ahmediyyas slate signboard change of mosque

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Law enforcers once again hung a discriminatory signboard at the Ahmediyya Muslim Jamaat Complex on March 15 at Seuzgar area in the district, the Ahmediyyas alleged at a press conference at the complex yesterday.

The sign reads, "This is the Kadiani Upashanay in Bogra: Muslims, don't be confused into considering it a mosque."

Demanding immediate intervention to remove the signboard, Khandaker Azmal Haque, the Bogra district unit president of the Ahmediyya Jamaat, said his community has been threatened by the incident.

In a written speech, Azmal said the law enforcers bowed down to the pressure of a group of religious fanatics and illegally hung the signboard on March 11.

"This has seriously hit the religious feelings of the Ahmediyyas," he said. Some unknown people, however, removed the signboard in the darkness of the same night on March 11.

Azmal Haque further alleged that the signboard was hung despite police presence. Those who came there by a microbus and a motor cycle in plainclothes after hanging the signboard said they were police. On-duty police later identified them.

The police barred the Ahmediyyas when they wanted to remove the signboard, but the police said, "This cannot be removed now. Measures will be taken according to the decision of the higher authorities."

Uttarbaranga Missionary Maolana Bashirul Rahman and local Moallim Ehteshamul Bashir claimed that the Ahmediyya Jamaat was established in Bogra back in 1914 and that the Ahmediyyas have been going to the mosque since its establishment in 1914.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge Fazul Karim, who first heard the case on July 15, found gross discrepancies in the investigation process and said the probe was questionable.

The court ordered a detailed investigation and submission of a supplementary report on the charge sheet. Nawshir Ali, now Sylhet Zone ASP of CID, replaced Kabiruddin as the IO.

He submitted a supplementary report to the court on August 26 putting the number of accused at 43 and implicating 114 people in the charge sheet.

Both the charge sheet and supplementary report mentioned Hafizur Rahman, Din Mohammad, Abu Kahsem Madhu, Sobhan Hazi and Yakub