

3 YEARS OF IRAQ INVASION

# Anti-war rallies call for immediate US pullout

AP, Seoul

Thousands of anti-war protesters around the world on Sunday demanded coalition troops leave Iraq, but demonstrations in many countries were far smaller than anticipated on the third anniversary of the US-led invasion.

Protesters in South Korea demanded their government bring home its 3,200 troops from northern

Iraq, the largest contingent of foreign troops after the US and Britain.

"No occupation in Iraq!" chanted the protesters at the Seoul Station Plaza, pumping their fists and holding signs reading, "No War, No Bush."

"The US has massacred hundreds of thousands ... of people in Iraq," protest leader Oh Jong-ryol told the crowd. "There are growing voices around the world that the US

imperialists should be brought to the war tribunal."

South Korea, which contributed troops despite strong popular opposition, plans to bring about 1,000 soldiers home starting in April.

Andrew Whittet, an English teacher from the state of New York, said he rallied in South Korea to

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## Participation of all parties needed for acceptable polls

Says Chammas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Participation of all political parties in the upcoming general elections is needed for acceptable polls, US Charg  d'Affaires in Dhaka Judith A Chammas said yesterday.

"I hope all political parties will exercise their democratic responsibilities and rights in the general election," Chammas said. She was speaking at a meeting organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at its conference room.

Terming the general election a 'critical' one and forecasting that the polls will be observed widely and carefully, she also urged the people of Bangladesh as well as the participants to accept the election results.

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## Criminal killed in 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A listed criminal was killed during a "shootout" between police and his accomplices at Mashiali under Khanjahan Ali Police Station early yesterday.

The dead is Wazir Mohammad Bhuiyan alias Mukul Bhuiyan, 38, from Damodar under Phultala upazila.

He was arrested on Saturday night at Tootpara in Khulna Sadar.

Police said they took him to Mashiali at around 4:30am to recover illegal arms following leads extracted from him. As they reached the spot, Mukul's accomplices opened fire on them prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

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## Phoenix finance manager gets bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted ad interim bail to finance manager of Phoenix Fabrics Ltd in connection with its building collapse on February 25 in which 21 people died and 50 were injured.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the District and Sessions Judge's Court granted bail to Sheikh Rezaul Karim Faruq following a criminal appeal filed by his defence lawyers against the rejection order of the lower court on March 9.

In her submission, Advocate Sufia Akhter Helen told the court that her client was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to

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Prayer Timing		
March 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-55	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

# 4 die as cab catches fire after crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people were burnt alive inside a taxi near Vakurta Bridge in Savar on Dhaka-Aricha highway early yesterday as the taxi caught fire after a head-on collision with a truck.

The four bodies, three passengers and the cabbie, were so badly charred beyond recognition.

Police said the Dhaka-bound taxi caught fire from its gas cylinder as it hit the truck which had got on the highway from the wrong side of the road around 1:30am. The number

plate of the taxi also could not be read.

Police recovered the bodies after fire brigade put out the fire and sent the bodies to Dhaka Medical College (DMC) morgue for autopsy.

The police inquest report said the victims were all male but their age could not be determined.

The duty officer of Savar Police Station said the owner of the taxi has contacted them over telephone and said he would claim the bodies. Police seized the truck but its driver and conductor escaped arrest.

# 7 dead as blast rips thru' Pak police van

REUTERS, Dera Ismail Khan

A bomb blew up a police vehicle in northwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing seven people, including three policeman and three paramilitary troops, police said.

"It was a remote-controlled bomb," Daar Ali Khattak, District Police Officer, told reporters. It blew up the vehicle as it was patrolling on the outskirts of the town of Dera Ismail Khan.

Khattak said a passerby was among the dead and hospital officials said five people were wounded.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack but Khattak said it could be part of the ongoing militant violence in the nearby tribal region bordering Afghanistan.

"It could be the reaction of the (military) operation going on in the tribal region."

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# Bid to lower fare of CNG-run vehicles thwarted

RAFIQ HASAN

The government's attempt to lower the fare of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) run passenger vehicles has been bogged down in the face of opposition the transport owners.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda at a meeting with the transport owners yesterday proposed lowering the fare of CNG run vehicles that are charging fare similar to that of the diesel run vehicles.

Because of lower fuel cost, the fares of the CNG run vehicles should be lower than those of the

diesel run ones, Huda said.

But the CNG run bus owners opposed the proposal saying that the number of CNG buses, which are plying on test basis, is still very small and any attempt to lower the fare might discourage introducing more such buses.

The owners further argued that the CNG run vehicle-manufacturing companies are very few.

Only China and India produce such vehicles and the owners face a lot of difficulties in collecting them, they said.

The minister later suspended the idea of lowering fare for a few

months.

The CNG run three wheeler auto-rickshaw owners did not turn up at the meeting although they were invited.

Opposing the idea of lowering the per kilometre charge, an auto-rickshaw workers leader demanded doubling the charge.

While the rent fixed for a three-wheeler is Tk 300 per day, the vehicle owners charge Tk 500-600, forcing the drivers to demand money over and above the meter bill, he said.

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PHOTO: STAR

A colourful procession celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Culture Festival, 2006 parades through the road near TSC on Dhaka University campus. The Society for Environment and Human Development organised the rally yesterday.

# No polls without reforms, says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the 14-party would not let any election take place if their demand for caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) reforms are not met.

She said the BNP-Jamaat gov-

ernment has been dilly-dallying with their reform proposals to manufacture a win in the next polls.

"The reforms proposal of the 14-party opposition alliance has turned into people's demand. Hopefully we will force the government to meet the demands," Hasina added.

Hasina was addressing a meet-

ing marking the "National Children's Day" on the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Hotel Sheraton in Florida, says a press release.

AL chief Hasina said Bangladesh

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## 8 to die for murder

UNB, Cox's Bazar

The Additional District and Sessions Judge Court yesterday sentenced eight people to death for killing an NGO official.

The convicts are Delwar, Shafi, Lalu, Ishaq, Kamal, Alam, Nurul Alam and Helal. Of them, Delwar, Shafi, Lalu and Ishaq were tried in absentia.

According to the prosecution, Saiful Islam Chowdhury, manager of a Japanese NGO 'Waska', was gunned down by robbers at Moheshkhali Channel on August 26, 1996 when he along with his colleagues was going to Cox's Bazar town by a boat.

The NGO workers also fired back at the robbers leaving one of them dead on the spot.

After examining 12 witnesses, Judge Mutazidur Rahman declared the judgement.

## Body formed to probe Bibiyana fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government formed a one-member committee with a Petrobangla senior general manager to probe into the incident of fire at the Bibiyana gas field that occurred last week.

Sources said that the general manager, rather experienced in gas

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