

Troops mass mortars, India calls situation out of control

BSF opens fire again

STAR REPORT

The Bangladesh-India border situation has turned explosive with both sides positioning mortars and heavy machineguns, and digging bunkers yesterday.

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) again opened fire on Tuesday night on the Mistripara frontier under Sadar upazila of Panchagarh.

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) is on a maximum state of alert, as Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes has called the situation "out of control".

"There are times when things go out of control and in this particular case, things have unfortunately gone beyond control," Fernandes told reporters in Bangalore yesterday.

Indian Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani called on Bangladesh to cooperate to stem the "massive influx of illegal immigrants" into India.

Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha also termed the situation out of control. "We don't want the situation to blow up. We have always looked at Bangladesh as a very friendly neighbour. But then, you always clap with both hands."

On the frontier, the Border Security Force (BSF) has bolstered its strength by withdrawing paramilitary forces from anti-military oper-

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PHOTO: AFP

A child peers through the window of a prison van in Howrah, India, yesterday. Ninety-two people allegedly from Bangladesh were produced before court after arrest for their failure to show valid documents.

Fernandes warns, Sinha wants calm

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian Defence Ministers George Fernandes yesterday said "things have gone beyond control" on the border with Bangladesh and more security personnel have been deployed at the spot where tension continued.

His remarks came in the wake of a tense border situation over the nationality of 213 people, including women and children, stranded in the no-man's land in West Bengal on the Bangladesh border.

"There are times when things go

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FM dismisses Fernandes' claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan dismissed Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes' claim that the border situation has gone "out of control".

"I don't believe the situation has gone beyond control," he told the BBC radio last night. "We are extremely cautious in our actions and remarks. There is no provocation from our side."

Morshed stressed that any differ-

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ADP trimmed but not to IMF wish

Foreign aid allocation slashed to Tk 6,500cr

INAM AHMED

The government yesterday finalised a Tk 17,000 crore revised annual development programme (ADP), about 12 per cent less than the original budget.

Still, officials fear the final utilisation of funds will be even lower at the end of the fiscal year.

The cut is Tk 2,000 crore less than suggested by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a condition for its loans.

But the most worrying issue is that the amount of foreign aid to be spent has been slashed from Tk 7,700 crore to Tk 6,500 crore. Economists and donors have been emphasising the importance of making use of aid allocations. The aid pipeline has already bulged to \$6 billion.

"We cannot use foreign aid as we are lacking adequate counterpart local fund," said a finance ministry official. "Inability to fulfil conditions is another reason for slow aid use."

Local financing has also been cut to Tk 10,500 crore from the original Tk 11,500 crore.

A tripartite meeting of the finance ministry, planning commission and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation division decided the ADP cut yesterday.

The meeting described the rate at which allocations are being spent

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Powell lays out new case for Iraq war

Baghdad continuing policy of deception, UN told

AFP, United Nations

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, laying out a case for war on Iraq before the UN Security Council, yesterday charged that Baghdad was continuing a longstanding "policy of evasion and deception" with UN weapons inspectors.

Using telephone intercepts of conversations between Iraqi officials and satellite images of suspected arms plants in Iraq, Powell said the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was making an "active and systematic effort to keep key materials and people from inspectors".

The keenly awaited presentation was aimed at dispelling widespread doubts that Baghdad is flouting UN demands to disarm under Security Council Resolution 1441 passed unanimously in November.

Powell told the 14 other Security Council members: "Iraq's behaviour demonstrates that Saddam Hussein and his regime have made no effort - no effort - to disarm as required by the international community."

He added that Baghdad "has now placed itself in danger of the serious consequences in Resolution 1441" and warned the world body that it

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Anticrime drive was launched as per cabinet decision: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the joint operation led by army was launched as per decision of the cabinet to curb crimes left by the past Awami League.

"None in the four-party alliance government took the decision unilaterally. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting and people welcomed it," she said replying to a supplementary question of opposition Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmaker M Mashiur Rahman Ranga.

Now terrorism has been eliminated, she said and sought cooperation of the opposition lawmakers to maintain law and order and implement the government's develop-

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Two policemen stabbed to death in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Unidentified miscreants stabbed to death two police constables and seriously injured another one near Itagachha police outpost under Satkhira Sadar thana in the early hours of yesterday.

The deceased were identified as constables AK Fazlul Haq, 40, and Abdul Muttalib, 36. Critically injured constable Ahad Ali, 45, is undergoing treatment at the Khulna Medical College.

Police sources said the three constables of the Itagachha police outpost were on patrol in front of Safurunnessa Mohila College when they came across a group of suspected miscreants passing through the area.

As the policemen challenged

them and began a body search, the miscreants attacked the three constables with sharp weapons, killing constables AK Fazlul Haq and Abdul Muttalib on the spot and seriously injuring Ahad Ali.

Police rushed to the scene but were unable to catch the killers. The bodies were first sent to the Satkhira Morgue for autopsy and later to the victims' village homes for burial.

The miscreants were preparing to commit some crime in the area, police said. A case was filed with the Satkhira thana. None was arrested till filing of this report last night.

Enayet Ullah Dewan, DIG of Khulna Range, has ordered a manhunt to arrest the killers.

Muhuri murder case verdict today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The verdict in the principal Gopal Krishna Muhuri murder case will be delivered today, about 15 months after the gruesome killing.

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Chittagong Division, heard the sensational case.

Hearing of the case, transferred to the tribunal on January 1 this year, began on January 8.

Muhuri, principal of Nazirhat college, was shot dead by assailants at his Jamal Khan residence in the city on November 16, 2001.

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Gopal Krishna Muhuri