

15 Kashmiri militants killed as peace hope erodes

AFP, Srinagar

The Indian army said yesterday it had killed 15 rebels in Indian Kashmir, as nascent peace moves between India and Pakistan were engulfed by acrimony that echoed at the UN General Assembly.

Troops killed the rebels overnight after they crossed the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border, into Indian Kashmir's northwestern Gurez sector in Baramullah district, army spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Mukhtar Singh said.

The latest clash took to 355 the number of people killed since the August 30 slaying of top rebel commander Ghazi Baba, which sparked a surge of revenge attacks by separatist rebels.

An army officer said Israeli-made thermal imagers had helped the

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PHOTO: STAR

Girls enjoy a moment of joy at a sports competition organised by Bangladesh Foundation for the Disabled to celebrate Child Rights Week, on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Blair faces protest from anti-war members at Labour Party meet

REUTERS, Bournemouth

British Prime Minister Tony Blair faced angry protests from anti-war members of his ruling Labour Party yesterday as Iraq was kept off the agenda at the toughest party conference of his leadership.

And chancellor of the exchequer (finance minister) Gordon Brown looked set to enrage the party's left-

wing camp further by signalling new economic reforms that could put him on a collision course with powerful trade unions.

Labour's annual conference comes as the party suffers from its worst poll ratings since Blair became leader in 1994. A poll in the Observer newspaper on Sunday showed 41 per cent of Labour members want Blair to resign before

the next election.

Brown will extend no olive branch to left-wingers when he asks the conference on Monday to back "the next stage of our economic reforms", including the possible introduction of regional pay bargaining, a move opposed by the unions.

He will say Labour will press

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Questions leak puts PSC credibility in question

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is yet to take effective steps to track down persons involved in alleged recurrent leakages of question papers of different examinations held under it, giving rise to controversy and a growing suspicion over its credibility.

PSC sources blamed employees of the Bangladesh Government (BG) Press, which prints the question papers, for any leakage. They also pointed their fingers at univer-

sity teachers, who prepared questions for the examinations, for any such mischief.

On the other hand, a number of teachers of Dhaka University (DU) and BG Press sources claimed a section of the PSC members and officials are responsible for question leakage, if any, of the BCS examinations and that for recruitment of sub-registrars recently.

The issue came up at the meeting between the PSC and the BG Press held on Sunday with a view to remove mutual suspicion.

Sources said the PSC members themselves are also divided on the question leakage issue because of their differing political beliefs.

"Mistrust and political differences among the PSC members have made the whole affair more complicated. Each side of the political divide blame the other for having hands behind question leakage," one source said seeking anonymity.

The examinations for sub-registrars were held on Friday amid widespread allegations of question

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Dhaka ready for Iraq rebuilding role

FM tells UN Assembly UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has called for ensuring an effective and credible role of the UN in Iraq's transition to democracy, expressing readiness to participate in the rebuilding of the war-ravaged country.

"We stand ready to take part in the reconstruction and rebuilding of Iraq in the true spirit of brotherhood that characterises the relationships between our two nations," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told the UN General Assembly in New York last night.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh supports the forthcoming international conference for Iraq reconstruction convened by the United Nations and looks forward to

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US convoys ambushed, 1 Marine killed west of Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

US forces used tanks and rocket-firing helicopters to fight their way out of ambushes yesterday as two convoys came under heavy attack west of the Iraqi capital, leaving at least one soldier dead.

Witnesses said the Americans took heavy casualties in the assaults conducted with bombs, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and small arms northwest of Khaldiya, where fighting raged for hours, and the nearby town of Fallujah.

AFP correspondents at the scene saw two Black Hawk helicopters land in Khaldiya and one left with four wounded. Two US ambulances rushed to the site while several US warplanes and helicopters roared overhead.

A US military spokeswoman confirmed that one soldier died and another was wounded in a bomb attack on a convoy around the nearby town of Habbaniyah, where a large US base is located.

The attacks were the latest in the Sunni Muslim region west of Baghdad where anti-US sentiment

runs high and attacks on American forces have been frequent since the ouster of Saddam Hussein in April.

They came as the US military confirmed that six US soldiers were wounded Sunday in a bomb attack on a convoy in Fallujah, 50 km west of the capital.

On another front, an Iraqi official working on how to draft a new constitution came under gunfire, which left his bodyguard dead in the second attack on a political figure in

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AL unbending on CPA meet boycott

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday sounded unbending on its decision to boycott the 49th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference that opens in Dhaka on October 4.

"We have taken a decision on the CPA conference and there is no scope to join it under the present circumstances," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said emerging from the party's Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting.

He brushed aside the rumours about his party's participation in the conference at the last minute.

"Despite our eagerness, we are not participating in the conference as the government totally ignored the main opposition in the run-up to the conference," he told newsmen.

The ALCWC meeting was held at the party's Dhanmondi office with senior leader Abdus Samad Azad in

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Table with prayer timings for September 30, including Sun Rises, Sun Sets, and Azan/Jamaat times.

CityCell plans cut on tariff charges

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Cell phone operator Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited (PBT) plans to reduce call charges and also eliminate inter-zonal call charges for its CityCell service from November 1.

Under the new tariff reduction plan, there will be no inter-zonal call charges and per minute call charge will be Tk 4.00 from Tk 6.00. The rate will be Tk 3.00 in off-peak hours and Tk 1.50 in super off-peak hours, a senior PBT official told The Daily Star yesterday.

The PBT will introduce 'one2three' numbers instead of 'one2one' now, meaning reduced tariff will be applicable to three different numbers without any additional charges. Call charges will be Tk 2.00 in peak hours, Tk 1.50 in off-peak and Tk 0.75 in super off-peak hours, the official said.

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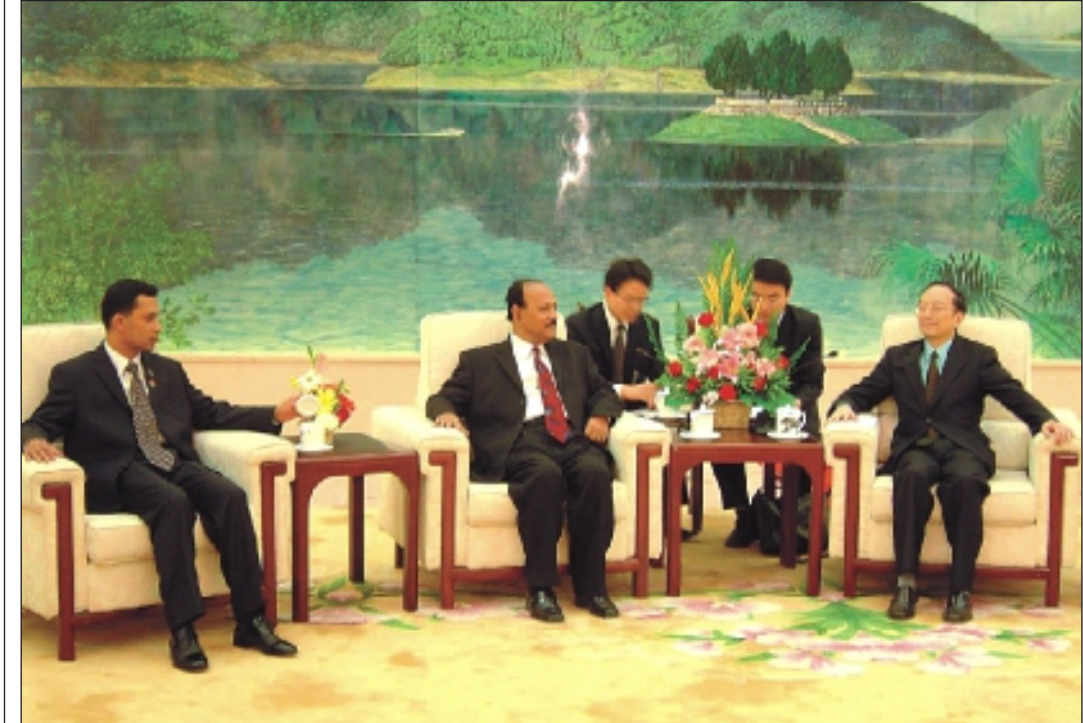


PHOTO: BNP

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Senior Joint Secretary General Tareq Rahman meet Jiang Zhenghua, vice-chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the Communist Party of China, in Beijing Saturday.

Graft case against Ershad Verdict adjourned as lawyer doubts justice from court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The delivery of the judgement in the corruption case against former president HM Ershad for illegal withdrawal of income tax money has been adjourned till disposal tomorrow of a petition filed by the defence lawyers.

The adjournment followed the petition submitted by the defence lawyers on behalf of the accused.

In the petition, the lawyers stated that their client would not get justice from the court. So, they sought adjournment for a month to file a criminal appeal with the High Court for transferring the case to some other court.

Moving the petition, the lawyers cited some decisions of the higher courts regarding transfer of a case at the stage of judgement delivery.

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Ethnic Dinajpur people seek compensation, protest raw land deal

PINAKI ROY from Dinajpur

Indigenous people of Dinajpur yesterday demonstrated against the officials of the forest department for what they said grabbing their land in the name of social forestry project and depriving them of the promised benefits.

They also registered their protest against the Asian Development Bank and demanded compensation as they suffered because of the project.

The indigenous people submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through the Thana Nirbahi officer (TNO), demanding implementation of their 11-point demand.

The demands include putting a stop to land-grabbing of the indigenous people, withdrawal of false

cases, preparation of a list of the acquired land of the indigenous people, compensation for those affected by the social forestry project.

About 3,000 Santal, Orao, Mahali, Malo, Rajbangshi, Turi, Munda and Vuinmali people from villages of Nawabganj and other upazilas gathered at the Nawabganj Pilot High School premises yesterday.

They carried bows and arrows, machetes and axes and chanted 'stop torture on the indigenous people'.

They alleged that the forest department acquired 6,792 acres from the indigenous people in six upazilas of Dinajpur for the social forestry project. In Nawabganj

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BNP delegates return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The delegation of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by its Secretary General and Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan returned home last night after a weeklong visit to China.

The 16-member team including Tareque Rahman, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, left for China on September 22 at the invitation of international department of central committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The CPC leaders praised BNP's policy and programmes as realistic, popular and time-befitting. They also acclaimed programmes taken by the present government under Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and gave assurance of providing increased Chinese support in implementing development programmes.

Bhuiyan sought increased

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