# Norway suspends Lankan peace effort due to crisis

### Talks with Tigers should continue: Chandrika

Norway said yesterday it would suspend its efforts to end Sri Lanka's three decades of ethnic bloodshed until the president and prime minister resolved their power struggle

Norwegian Deputy Prime Minister Vidar Helgesen, who stayed an extra day here for talks with the key players, said the mediators needed "clarity" on

"Until such clarity is re-established, there is no space for further efforts by the Norwegian government to assist the parties," Helgesen told reporters

Norway can do nothing about," he said.

the picture after being undercut by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, a critic of the premier's proposed concessions to Tamil Tiger rebels

"There is not a stable peace in Sri Lanka today," Helgesen said. "I think, however, that the parties have committed to maintain the ceasefire.

ceasefire will be much more difficult to sustain in a political vacuum," he said.

Dr Mozammel Hossain, former state

minister Talukder Abdul Khalegue MP

and General Secretary of district BNP

prayers at Teligati. He was laid to rest in his

Union Parishad, the labour leader was

murdered in a planned way by his political

opponents to stop him for good from

contesting either upazila parishad elec-

tion or the next parliamentary election for

which he was making preparations, said

Relatives said the murder might be a

Bagerhat Awami League and all its

While refuting the allegation BNP

We are yet to unearth the reason

sequel either to political rivalry or his

refusal to pay huge amount of money as

toll recently demanded by the extremists.

front organisations have squarely blamed

BNP-Jamaat alliance for the murder of

leaders have urged the Awami League

behind the murder, said Bagerhat police

Superintendent Mesbahuddin while

giving assurance of a fair investigation into

the killing. Combing Operation is on a

Morrelganj and Kachua upazilas and 23

persons have so far been taken into

A half-day hartal was observed today

in Bagerhat in response to the call given on

Thursday by Awami League in protest

against the murder. Awami League and its

front organisations brought out proces-

sions demanding immediate arrest of the

custody for questioning.

leaders not to fish in troubled waters.

Sadekul Islam

 $Secretary of the \, district \, Awami \, League.$ 

 $family\,graveyard\,at\,his\,village\,home.$ 

The second janaza was held after Asr

Elected twice as chairman of Teligati

Shamsul Alam Talukder

"If progress in the political negotiations is made impossible, the ceasefire will become increasingly fragile.'

the rebels, whose three-decade campaign to set up a homeland for the Tamil minority has claimed more than

Norway in February 2002 arranged a ceasefire between Wickremesinghe's  $government \, and \, the \, Tigers, which \, both$ the rebels and the president have

Helgesen said he raised with Kumaratunga her remarks that Wickremesinghe's truce deal with the

"We took it up with the president, but she said she will uphold it (the sefire)," Helgesen said.

Kumaratunga on November 4 suspended parliament for two weeks and took over three key ministries including defence, giving her control of

The Norwegian envoy said Wickremesinghe felt he was no longer in a position to negotiate with the Tigers, who told the mediators they wanted security guarantees because of

responsibility for the peace process

tees," Helgesen said. 'He would not be able to take

decisions and make compromises at the table. So effectively, he has said that he is out of the peace process," he said.

The latest Norwegian mission was arranged before the political crisis and was primarily aimed at arranging a face-to-face meeting between the Colombo government and the Tamil Tigers to discuss a rebel blueprint for

"Peace talks could have started tomorrow," Helgesen said, "provided there was clarity about who is holding political authority and responsibility on behalf of the government to ensure the continuation of the ceasefire agreement and the resumption of peace negotiations."

"Until last week there was such clarity," Helgesen said. "Today there is no such clarity.'

Helgesen and Norwegian Special Advisor Erik Solheim met Thursday in the rebel-held northern town of Kilinochchi where the Tamil Tigers' supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran told them "there should be political stability in Colombo for the peace talks to

The Tigers pulled out of direct negotiations in April after accusing the government of failing to deliver on promises made at six rounds of discussions since September last year.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga said Friday that peace talks with Tamil Tiger rebels should go ahead despite peace broker Norway suspending its role due to her feud with the prime minister.

Kumaratunga as the acting defence minister ordered security forces to extend full cooperation to the Scandinavian force monitoring the ceasefire in place since February 2002. the president's spokesman said.

#### 72-hour transport strike reduced to 24-hour in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The transport workers and owners associations of Sylhet observed their 24-hour strike vesterday to realise a 20point demand

The associations, however, reduced their 72-hour strike to 24 hours at a meeting of the leaders of the associations and political leaders at the office of the superintendent of police (SP) in the early hours of yester-

The demands include withdrawal of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) services in differ-

The leading people of the Jaintapur, Gowainghat and Kanaighat upazila, who has been boycotting privately run buses and minibuses for 33 days for return of the regular BRTC services in Sylhet-Tamabil-Jafflong route, yesterday held another meeting at Jaintapur. They will meet again on November 18 to resolve the crisis, the SP of Sylhet said.

#### Khaleda in Madina FROM PAGE 12

Khaleda, accompanied by her family members, will stay in Saudi Arabia as a royal guest of the Saudi king.

She will stay in Madina till November 18 for Ziarat at the Rouza Muharak of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) and say her prayers at Masjid-e-Nababi.

The prime minister will spend the holy night of Shab-e-Qdar in prayers in Masjid-e-Haram in Makkah.

She is expected to return home on

Her 19-member entourage includes her youngest son Arafat Rahman and his wife, two grandchildren, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad

Nasiruddin and his wife, and prime minister's Political Secretary M Mosaddek Ali and his wife. "It is still possible for Bangladesh to avoid a nationwide AIDS epidemic because infection rates are low," the Cessna

#### were unhurt but the left propeller of the plane was damaged, airport offi-

The exigencies forced the ZIA authorities to suspend all incoming and outgoing flights at about 12:45pm.

Fire fighters at the airport were kept alert but it was not required, airport officials said. The aircraft was taken off the runway at 3:30pm.

cials said.

Earlier, in June last year a training plane crash-landed on a football ground at sector No. 4 in Uttara Model Γown, leaving the pilot dead. Another plane crash killed its woman pilot and her trainer in 1998.

UNB adds: The one-hour suspension forced scheduled flights of Saudi Arabian Airlines, Indian Airlines and a domestic plane of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to be diverted and landed at Singapore, Kolkata and Chittagong respectively.



affected areas.

affected people.

relief materials.

monga-hit people

Also present at the conference was

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, MP.

He said his party would soon send

medical teams to the northern region

to provide medical services to the

The AL leaders asked the govern-

ment to refrain from politicising its

relief distribution activities and

punish those involved in pilferage of

They also urged people from all

walks of life including social workers,

industrialists and the business com-

munity to come to the aid of the

said the opposition leader and AL

president might visit the northern

region soon to see for herself the

"If Awami League returns to

power, we'll take initiatives to resolve

unemployment problems of the

northerners that will help them get

over the monga crisis permanently,

Jalil said in response to a question on

a permanent solution to the problem.

Akhteruzzaman, Sultan M Mansur,

Dr Abdur Razzak MP, AFM

Bahauddin Nasim, Latif Siddiqui

MP, Prof Nazma Rahman and

well water has been heavily promoted

and developed in Bangladesh as a safe

and environmentally acceptable

alternative to microbiologically

Igbalur Rahim were also present.

Arsenic

AL leaders Obaidul Kader,

Replying to a query, Abdul Jalil

Senior Saudi government officials yesterday receive Prime Minister Khaleda Zia after she arrived at Prince Mohammad Bin Abdul Aziz International Airport in Medina en route to Makkah to perform Umrah.

For the Dhaka flower markets

## Flower trade in city AL: Monga

of the High Court mazar was the venue of the flower trade. Now it has spread to other specific areas of the city. A little distance away from the Shahbagh road corner towards the west lies the Katabon area where the flower shops outnumber the flower shops in any other area in the city. The neighbourhood around the Mahila Samity theatre venue is embellished by the presence of some flower shops At present, no statistics are available as to the total number of flower shops that are operating all over the city, besides numerous roadside vendors. Lately this wide appreciation of

flowers forms a new staple of business in the hands of some nondescript youngsters. They can be seen just at the moments shoppers go to board their cars at the end of their shopping or when the rickshaws we travel in get stalled along with cars at road junctions in traffic jams or in the busy shopping areas. These voungsters offer a couple of roses or sticks of Rajanigandha or small garlands of flowers at a small price. This appears to be a sublimated form of begging resorted to by an increasing number of poor boys and girls. They present a poignant spectacle of a grim battle for subsistence at all weathers, fair or In Western countries, there is a

system called interflora system under which one can send flowers not only from one neighbourhood to another but also from one city to another. Such a system is yet to be developed in

supplies mainly come from Gazipur, Konabari and Savar in the previous greater Dhaka district and also from several villages in Jessore district. In some villages in Jessore district. cultivation of different kinds of flowers for commercial purposes has become a large-scale agricultural industry employing more than a thousand families. The villages engaged in such largescale flower cultivation exceed 20 in number and the people of those villages engaged in such cultivation are reported to earn a level of income which is said to be more than the income level obtained from cultivation of other crops. This is said to be a very encouraging development in improving the village economy. According to our Export

Promotion Bureau, there are bright prospects for earning substantial foreign exchange through export of flowers after meeting the internal needs. At present the turnover in the global flower market is reportedly valued at more than 160 billion dollars. Holland enjoys the foremost position in the global market for the commodity with a share of 67 per cent of the trade. Italy, Colombia, India, Kenva and Israel are also engaged in the foreign trade. For Bangladesh experts in this line feel there are immense possibilities in this field if cultivation of flowers of different varieties is boosted through special measures and on scientific lines in suitable areas of the country.

# Anti-AIDS project

agenda, but nothing has been done so

far to that end, an official said. The selection of non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) for advocacy was supposed to be complete way back in the first year of the launch of the project.

In the wake of allegation of irregularities in selection, Unicef was given the iob later. "We are now working on the selection of the NGOs to be involved in behavioural change communication (BCC)," a Unicef official said.

To expedite the process, a contract between Unicef and the government was signed about 10 days ago.

Despite repeated requests, the project office declined to say anything about the delay in its implementation. The WB said earlier the number of

HIV/AIDS cases in Bangladesh was relatively low, but the patterns of behaviour which could cause a rapid spread of infection were widespread.

In particular, sharing of needles by drug users, low condom use in commercial sex and unscreened blood transfusion threatened to raise the number of cases in the coming years, the WB said.

Iraqi Freedom began on March 20. American casualties from the broader then team leader of the project in the WB US war on terrorism, which has produced 488 military deaths in Iraq, had said in 2000. Experts say some major factors like Afghanistan, the Philippines,

significant prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among

#### Dengue suspects

admitted to the Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital and four to Nibedita Hospital.

Two people -- Mitu, 6, Sanjay Ray, 18 -- died of the disease in the capital on Thursday and a woman died early last week.

Dengue fever causes excruciating muscle and joint pains, high fever and severe headache. Its more virulent form, Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever, can cause internal bleeding and death. The fever, for which there is no vaccine, is spread by Aedes mosquito.

They pointed out the number of HIV

positive cases cannot be known due to

the country's limited voluntary testing

and counselling facilities and the stigma

and fear of being detected as an HIV

positive person. "For these, we have no

idea how many people are (HIV) posi-

American dead in Iraq, where US forces

number about 130,000 troops -- the

same number reached in Vietnam by

ently surpassed the Vietnam figure last

Sunday, when a US soldier killed in a

rocket-propelled grenade attack south

of Baghdad became the conflict's 393rd

American casualty since Operation

Southwest Asia and other locations.

Statistics from battle zones outside

Iraq show that 91 soldiers have died

since Oct. 7, 2001, as part of Operation

Enduring Freedom, which President

Bush launched against Afghanistan's

former Taliban regime after the Sept.

11, 2001, attacks on New York and

rejected comparisons between Iraq

and Vietnam, which traumatised

Americans a generation ago with a sad

procession of military body bags and

television footage of grim wartime

Recent opinion polls show public

support for the president eroding as he

heads toward the 2004 election, partly

because of public concern over the

deadly cycle of guerrilla attacks and

suicide bombings in Iraq.

The Bush administration has

Washington killed 3,000 people.

Larger still is the number of

The casualty count for Iraq appar-

US toll in Iraq

tive," an expert said.

In the mid-1990s, the crisis emerged into broad public awareness. The origin of the arsenic pollusex workers, low condom use and other tion is geological in this case; arsenic high risk sexual behaviours and low is released to ground water under awareness about the dangers of the HIV naturally occurring aquifer condiand STIs among the population indicate why the country might face an epidemic. They stressed immediate

unsafe untreated surface water.

The EAWAG and the University of Lausanne are so far working together with the Hanoi Institute in Vietnam. But the researchers would like to do more. "We are now facing a lack of finances in order to do field tests with Biosensor on a large scale," said Meer. At least, \$150,000 would be needed.

According to the government, only 71 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water, since the arsenic problem crept up. But some scientists put the figure at less than 40 percent.

Already, more than one million people are suffering from health problems in Bangladesh because of the exposure to arsenic water. "Our test could make sure at a low cost that no-one is exposed to this lifethreatening danger," Meer notes.

#### **Textbooks**

"We requested the NCTB chairman to ask publishing houses to pay 1 percent in bid security when they submit letters of offer. It will check malpractice in the bidding. They also alleged that a section of

NCTB officials was trying to delay the book publishing to tarnish the image of the government.

"It is not possible for 43 publishers to print such a large number of textbooks before the next academic year starts," according to the statement.

The BBPSA leaders also demanded that the NCTB hands out the publishing work to all listed publishers so that textbooks could reach the students in

The BBPSA will submit a memorandum to the prime minister, education minister and NCTB chairman in a few days, seeking intervention.

BBPSA President Mohammed Abu Taher read out the statement at the press conference, also attended by its Vice-President Shah Alam and Director Nasim Ali Chowdhury.

### **B** Chowdhury

20 last year, said after his resignation he had said he would stand by the people during a critical situation and offer his contribution as a senior citizen for the country's welfare.

He said government efforts to combat crime and corruption -- the two top election agenda clearly spelled out by him and the present prime minister during conferences with diplomats, donors and journalists -- have failed after the two-year rule of the BNP-led coalition "Today, newspaper reports suggest

that the number one agendum (combating crime) has certainly not yet been fulfilled. There were some efforts, but they failed. The reason for the failure must be searched out," he said. About corruption, he said, " ... We've

seen corruption in the past and still see it. The efforts to curb corruption have not been successful. And people are not hopeful of any good programmes of the government to curb corruption in the

Chowdhury also said the price hike of essentials coupled with the famine-like situation in the north have badly affected the poor and limited income groups, adding that people did not expect such a

Asked if he would ask the government to resign for its failure, he said, "It's a highly political question ... if I had failed to deliver, I would have resigned as a politically sensitive person."

Referring to the prime minister, he further said, "I will not ask her (to resign) because I don't know how much politically sensitive she is. Those who are in power should have assessed people's reaction and found they longer enjoy people's confidence as before."

He outright rejected the suggestion that he enjoys support from external forces, saying, "First of all, I am not in politics. Secondly, I don't believe in external power and thirdly, I believe that after Almighty Allah, ultimate power lies with the people.

Replying to another question if he apprehends intervention by any extraconstitutional forces, he guipped: "What do you mean by extra-constitutional? Do you call the fall of Ershad in 1990 extraconstitutional? It was made constitutional as people are all powerful."

Asked if he foresees mass upsurge, he said, "I did not say that,"

During a nearly 45-minute interview. the former president also spelled out his ideas about the future structure of government and his future course of

He said he had a discussion with Gono Forum leader Dr Kamal Hossain and also had talks with former president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed during a function to commemorate the late Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed.

Although Chowdhury wouldn't name all the personalities he talked to, he acknowledged that a number of BNP leaders did contact him and inquired about the affairs of the state.

On speculations about emergence of a 'third force' headed by him, which would include people from both the BNP and Awami League, he said, "It's too early

"But if the country faces a critical situation, and if I feel that people want me, only then I will go. I will not betray the people. I'll be with them," he added. He said he would host an iftar party

for members of the civil society, former judges, intellectuals and journalists at Sheraton Hotel on November 22. To another question, he denied any

link between his present stance and cancellation of BTV programmes of his son Mahi B Chowdhury, a BNP law-About a press statement by BNP's

ront organisations rebutting his remarks and hinting at his "mysterious role" when oresident Ziaur Rahman was killed, he said the statement was made at a junior level "at the dictate of others". "I don't want to speak ill of those who

were politically reared by me," he said, and hoped that those who encouraged

#### US will stay

Donald Rumsfeld told US forces in the

Pacific vesterday there was no plan for an early withdrawal from Iraq, but Iraqis would get more power more quickly than initially thought. "There is no decision to pull out

early, indeed quite the contrary, Rumsfeld said when asked by troops stationed on the Pacific island outpost of Guam about reports of a premature withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.

"We will stay there as long as necessary to see that that country is put on a path" to democracy, he said.

Rumsfeld said the initial plan had been for a transfer of sovereignty after a new Iraqi constitution had been ratified and elections held.

But the process was likely to take about two years and the Iraqi Governing Council and US administrator Paul Bremer would try to find a way of transferring some responsibility before that.

"It does not mean that we would physically leave the country any sooner," Rumsfeld said.

"What it means is that the Iraqis would begin to take on a greater portion of responsibility for governing themselves sooner than the original thought was with respect to first a constitution, then national elections because of the time involved.

the statement would speak the truth in future and would not resort to any "falsehood" to mislead the people.

Recalling the assassination of president Ziaur Rahman in Chittagong, Chowdhury said he was in a different room with another minister. "I did not know about the incident beforehand," he

He however said it was interesting to note that some other ministers including Shah Aziz, who were supposed to go to Chittagong with president Zia, did not turn up for one reason or other.

Chowdhury said he had made statements about the matter several times. appeared before investigations and a martial law court. " I appeared before three investigations and also gave evidence to a chief justice ... my position is

He said president Ziaur Rahman made him party secretary general and deputy prime minister. He was also deputy leader in parliament both while in government and opposition. He also erved as education minister. Under the present government, he was made foreign minister and elected president by the 300-member parliament.

About the allegation of conspiracy

brought against him by BNP's front organisations while he was president, Chowdhury posed a counter question as to why he should get involved in a conspiracy after being elected to the highest Spelling out his formula of future

government, Chowdhury said there should be two vice-presidents and three deputy prime ministers to assist the president and the prime minister for effective governance During President Zia's time, he said there was one vice-president and three

deputy prime ministers (DPMs). Later the post of DPM was cancelled but that of vice-president continued till Ershad's He said one vice-president would be in charge of law and parliamentary affairs and the other in charge of administration. The first DPM, he said, would also be

the deputy leader in parliament to look

after parliamentary and legal affairs, the

second in charge of administration and the third in charge of development. The cabinet, he said, would comprise of 30-40 efficient ministers. The prime minister would appoint 80 per cent of the ministers while the ruling parliamentary

partywould nominate 20 per cent. He said out of the 300 parliamentary seats, 200 MPs would be elected by direct vote while remaining 100 seats would be allocated pro rata on the percentage of votes polled by political parties, allowing induction of eminent personalities, professionals and dedicated political leaders into parliament. "This would help make parliament more effective,

vibrant and enlightened.' Chowdhury also favoured floor crossing by MPs after three years, main-

"This is just my opinion. They are not just to be imposed. Politicians and experts may accept my proposals or reject. I will not live long, but just leave my ideas to future generation to think about," he said.

"Because the way elections are being held, there is no chance for good people to contest the elections and be elected to parliament," he added

#### Outlaws kill 2 in Rajbari

Two people were killed allegedly by the activists of outlawed Sarbahara Party at Ganjanandapur and Khamardanga villages in Pangsha Upazila on Thursday night.

The victims were identified as Shukur Ali, 60, a former member of Harinbaria Union Parishad and Abu Mia, 35, a listed criminal.

Police said the outlaws swooped on Shukur Ali while he was returning home from Kalukhali bazaar at about 8pm. They shot and slaughtered him. The same group attacked Abu Mia at village Khamardanga at midnight and strangled him.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to hospital morgue for

#### AL turns down

FROM PAGE 12 session when its lawmakers walked out

to protest the switching off of the microphone of Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina by the chair.

The AL preconditions include unreserved apologies from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and State Minister for Housing and Public Works Alamgir Kabir on three separate issues.

It demanded apologies from Khaleda for pegging a non-MP BNP newcomer as a de facto legislator for a Faridpur constituency, from Sircar for his comment that parliament functioned smoothly without the opposition and from Kabir for derogatory remarks against Hasina

Speaking at a roundtable organised by Bangladesh Parliament Journalists Association on November 6 in Dhaka, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed wondered why the opposition made such demands in the first place that "we cannot meet".

### Activists of National Garment Workers' Federation brings out a procession in Dhaka vesterday, demanding trial of the killers of a garment worker in Narayangaj and pay of workers' arrears and bonuses ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

#### who was in charge of the peace process. $assured\,remains\,in\,force.$ after three days of mediation. "This is one single impediment rebels was "invalid." "So we will go home and wait.' He said Prime Minister Ranil

Wickremesinghe, who revived the peace bid after his election in December 2001, was effectively out of

"We need to make clear that the

Kumaratunga invited Norway in 1999 to help broker peace but she since has accused Oslo of being too soft on

all security forces and the police.

"The prime minister can't take

Injured AL leader supporters were reported from different Police have stepped up security

around BNP, Jamaat and Awami League

party offices. Joint forces are patrolling

round the clock to face any unpleasant

Meanwhile, the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party's (PBCP) Bagerhat regional committee (Janajuddho) claimed responsibility for the killing of Awami League leader Sadekul Islam.

In a Fax message to some local

newspapers one Amit Hasan on behalf of the underground party claimed responsibility for the 'liquidation' of the UP chairman branding him 'an extortionist and a rapist. The message also claimed that Sadekul Islam used to misappropriate money realised from innocent people in

the name of providing them jobs abroad. It

further claimed that the labour leader was

a land grabber. The message concluded

with the claim that the 'physical liquida-

tion' is part of the PBCP's continued

struggle against 'class enemies.

FROM PAGE 1

youths and five others for the killing. Duty officer of Shyampur Police Station said last night their team picked up some youths from the area but had not returned to the station till

Meanwhile, a youth was run over by train while he was crossing the tracks at Mohakhali Railgate Thursday

filing of this report at 9:30 last night.

All shops and business establishments Railway police said the 22-year-old in Bagehrat town and Morrelganj upazila vouth in pink shirt was cut into pieces by the Dhaka-Chittagong Mail at 11:15pm.

