

# UN commitment to war-free world reaffirmed

BSS, Dhaka

Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan has reaffirmed the world body's firm commitment to building a world free from the scourge of war.

"Let us pay tribute to men and women from countries across the world who serve selflessly, tirelessly and fearlessly in UN peacekeeping operations. Let us remember the heroes who have laid down their lives in lands far from their own in the service of peace," he said in a message on the eve of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers.

According to the message, the UN peacekeeping operations are now increasingly complex and multi-dimensional, going beyond monitoring a ceasefire to actually bringing failed states back to life, often after decades of conflict.

The blue helmets and their civilian colleagues work together to organise elections, enact police and judicial reform, promote and protect human rights, conduct mine-clearance, advance gender equality, achieve the voluntary disarmament of former combatants, and support the return of refugees and displaced people to their homes," said Annan.

He said this invaluable work does not come without risk. More peacekeepers died in the service of the United Nations in 2005 than in any other year in the past decade, with 124 peacekeepers from 46 countries losing their lives to violence, disease and accidents.

A further 32 have fallen in the line of duty so far in 2006, including eight Guatemalan soldiers who died while striving to bring peace to the troubled eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Moreover, he said, the number of peacekeepers exposed to risk has increased exponentially, and continues to grow, more than 72,000 uniformed personnel and 15,000 civilians know serve in 18 peace operations administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, making the United Nations the largest multilateral contributor to post-conflict stabilisation worldwide.

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# No change of heart

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privatisation proposal emulating the model of Kamlapur Inland Container Depot (ICD), according to sources.

"One day people will understand why I opposed the idea of privatisation of NCT as they are now realising how damaging was the investment proposal by the so called American company SSA," Chowdhury said.

"When I started the movement against building a private port at the estuary of the Kamaphuli River during the regime of the previous government, many people including my fellow party colleagues did not understand its significance, but now they realise that I was right," he said.

Chowdhury claimed that the High Court gave a verdict in favour of his move and termed SSA a fraudulent company without strong financial background.

According to him, a mafia like group wanted to grab control of the Chittagong port in the name of privatisation.

"First of all the government should conduct a comprehensive study on the potential and requirements of the port and take long term plan before going for privatisation of one or two sections of the port," he said.

"Why the hurry for privatisation of port operations when the construction of NCT has yet to be completed?" he said. The mayor observed that the shipping minister had wanted to gain extra benefits by privatising port operations before the end of the government's tenure.

Asked whether agitation programmes like work stoppage or road blockade would damage the

image of the country abroad. Mohiuddin said "I wanted to preserve the prestige of the port for 364 days by shutting it down for a day."

"I have chalked out a plan for development of the port and it will be submitted to the prime minister soon," he said without going into details.

The mayor alleged that the government did not take any initiative to develop the backyard of the port for coping with increased volume of export-import items crossing the port.

According to him, the main reason for the recent ship congestion at the port is non-navigability of the Kamaphuli channel. The government did not take adequate steps to dredge the channel and for keeping it operative, he alleged.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain earlier told the media that the privatisation move was taken because NCT will be commissioned in October this year. "If we do not take an initiative to install handling equipment now, then the port will not be operative after the completion of jetty construction."

The shipping ministry officials contradicted with the view of Mohiuddin as they are not ready to compare the issue of setting up a private port by a foreign company with privatisation of operations at the new terminal.

"The two issues are totally different, because the government will have full control over the port although the port would be operated by a private company," said a high official of the shipping ministry explaining the government's privatisation plan.

On the other hand, the initiative for setting up a private port at the estuary

of the Kamaphuli River was damaging for the very existence of the Chittagong port as the private port would outshine the existing port once it had been allowed to operate, the official said.

But allowing a private company to operate at the new container terminal would do no harm to the existing port, he added.

The official claimed that at least six segments of container handling at the port are being operated by the private sector.

The city mayor during the interview also expressed his view against the move to privatise Chittagong airport saying, "There is no need to handover our airport to foreigners as our people can do everything".

"Have we become so inefficient that we cannot even manage an airport?" he wondered.

## Workshop on safe driving

A two-day long workshop on safe driving to create awareness among drivers and helpers was held at the Bikalpa Awareness Development Organisation (BADO) seminar hall in the city on May 26 and 27, says a press release.

A total of 20 drivers and helpers participated in the workshop.

The speakers emphasised the safe driving and increasing professional skill of drivers. BADO Chairman Mir Amiruzzaman Zanku presided.

BADO Secretary General Kamrul Islam Arzo, Advocate Noor Mohammad, Advocate Abdul Hakim, Advocate Belayet Hossain, Advocate Mahbubur Rahman spoke at the workshop.

BADO has decided to hold this programme on every Friday and Saturday.

