

Door to door visits start today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The work of updating the voter list by going from door to door begins today.

The finance ministry yesterday afternoon informed the EC Secretariat that Tk 39 crore has been allocated for the job.

The EC Secretariat yesterday said the recruitment of assistant officials has been completed. A total of 1,35,487 staff will visit from door to door across the country to revise the voter list by August 10.

But some field-level election officials in the capital said they could not complete the requirement as they have not yet heard from some of the new recruits while some have applied to be relieved of the job they have not even begun.

Besides, a number of election

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CONTROVERSIAL VOTER LIST

Finance asks for details of fund use

Secy says EC alone not responsible for wastage of Tk 43cr

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The finance ministry yesterday instructed the Election Commission's (EC) Secretariat to submit accounts of its previous expenditure of Tk 43 crore for preparing the controversial fresh voter list which the Supreme Court declared illegal, sources said.

In the wake of severe criticism for wastage of the public money, the secretary to the EC Secretariat yesterday claimed that the EC alone is not responsible for the wastage as it did the job on the suggestion of the law ministry and the attorney general. On receipt of their suggestions, the commission continued preparing a fresh voter list and published a draft of it, he said.

The secretary wondered why the EC will take responsibility for wastage of money. "Those who took the decision [on voter list ignoring the HC order] will be responsible," the secretary said.

Chief Election Commissioner yesterday claimed that the EC alone is not responsible for the wastage as it did the job on the suggestion of the law ministry and the attorney general. On receipt of their suggestions, the commission continued preparing a fresh voter list and published a draft of it, he said.

"So, it is unfair to hold the Election Commission alone responsible for the wastage of money," EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar said at a press briefing.

"As per rules, the Election Commission sought opinion of the

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Israeli attack on Lebanon 'religious terrorism'

Says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday termed Israeli attacks on Lebanon as "religious terrorism" and said the OIC and Arab League are not playing their desired role when the entire Muslim Ummah is facing ruin.

"We consider it as state terrorism, as gross violation of human rights. It is religious terrorism and fundamentalism on the part of Israel and its supporters," he said at a press briefing with Overseas Correspondents' Association Bangladesh (OCAB) members at the Jatiya Press Club.

Morshed expressed utter disappointment over the role of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League for "not coming to our [Muslim Ummah]

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Dengue spreads alarmingly

Around 230 hospitalised in capital

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The number of patients diagnosed with dengue is increasing at an alarming rate which the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) fears might turn into an epidemic.

A survey report of the DCC dengue control section revealed that around 150 government hospitals and private clinics in the capital are presently treating at least 230 dengue patients.

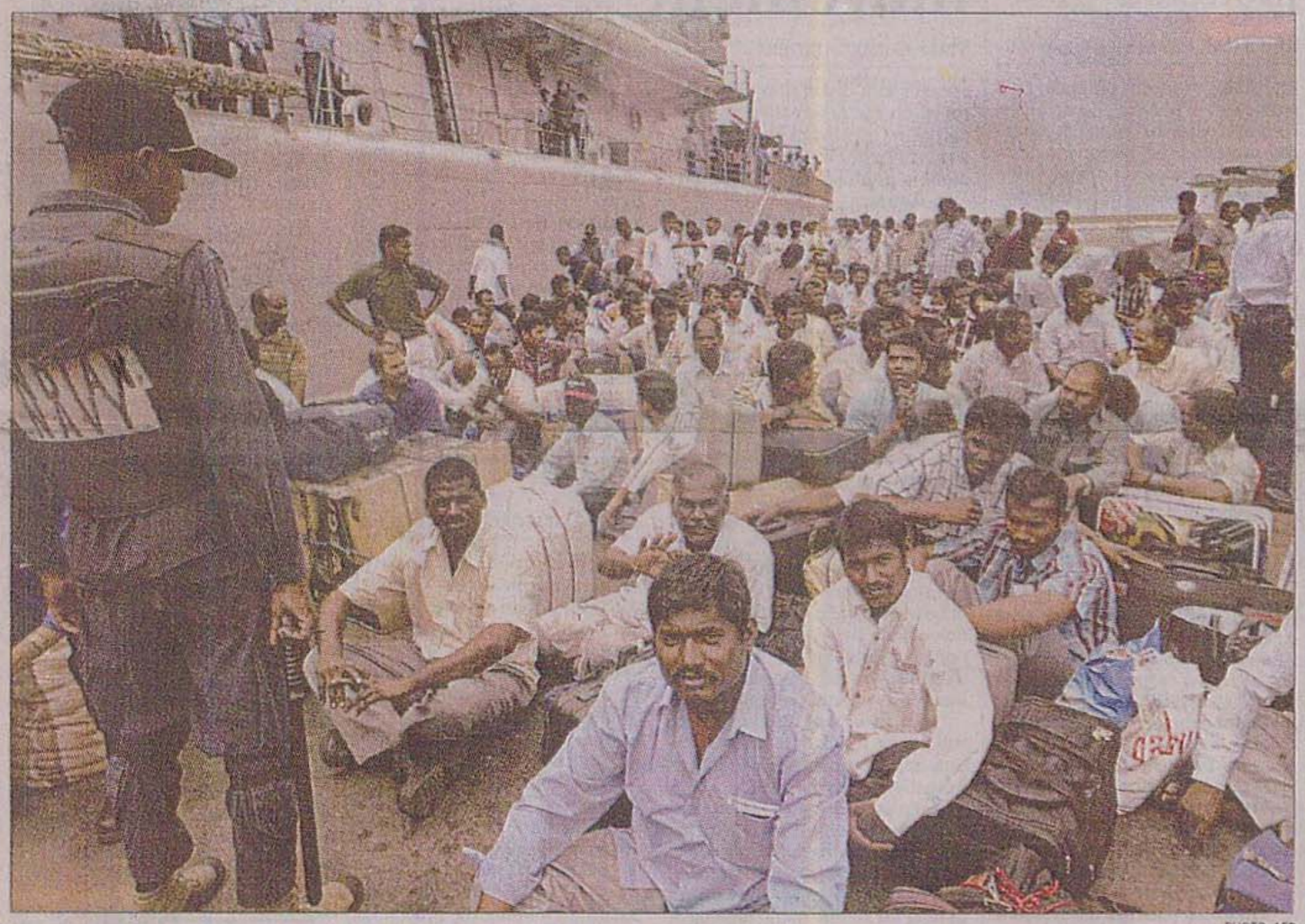
The DCC dengue control room is identifying the dengue-prone places in the capital and monitoring the condition of the infected people to take necessary measures to control the disease.

The DCC has identified wards No. 24, 25, 34, 40, 42, 43, 44, 49, 53, 54, 62 and 84 where dengue has hit

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Rafique-Un-Nabi, 16, one of the dengue patients admitted to the DMCH, shows his eyes with blood spots.



An Indian marine keeps watch as Indian citizens wait to board a vessel to flee Lebanon at Beirut's port yesterday. Due to the Israeli military offensive, thousands of foreign nationals are being evacuated from Lebanon by helicopters and ships chartered by their governments.

Boucher to talk US help in polls, fighting terrorism

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher said he would talk about how the US could help Bangladesh in holding successful general elections, achieve economic prosperity and fight terrorism during his next month's visit to Bangladesh.

Boucher, who is most likely to make his first-ever visit to Bangladesh on August 2-3, will hold talks with government and opposition leaders as well as representatives of the civil society on certain pressing issues facing the country.

"We have a very strong interest in seeing Bangladesh prosper and succeed. We have our assistance programmes, we have our support for democracy and I think we have made a strong effort in working with Bangladesh in the areas of economic prosperity, democracy and fight against terrorism," he said while speaking at a press briefing in Washington.

"I will talk to people in Bangladesh about how the United States can be helpful in helping them succeed in the upcoming elections," he said responding to a query from Arshad Mahmud of Dainik Prothom Alo at State Department press briefing on July 17.

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UNCTAD LDC REPORT 2006

Progress in fighting economic vulnerability, but not in HR, income

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has shown significant progress in overcoming economic vulnerability but its performance in addressing low income and poor human resource was mediocre, according to an Unctad report released yesterday.

"Bangladesh has done better in 15 indicators including per capita GDP growth rate and merchandise exports, and remained above the LDC average," said Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), while launching the report at the CPD office in Dhaka.

The other indicators in which the country performed well are debt-GDP ratio, average national labour productivity, birth, death, infant mortality and under-five mortality rates, life expectancy, population growth, school enrollment, road and aviation infrastructure, per capita energy consumption and manufacturing value added as a percentage of total value added.

The 'Unctad's LDC Report 2006: Developing Productive Capacity' was launched simultaneously across the world and on the basis of the report, the CPD prepared an analysis on where Bangladesh stands among the least developed countries (LDCs).

Bangladesh's GDP growth rate, gross capital formation and rail infrastructure are almost similar to the LDC average, Debapriya said.

Challenges for Bangladesh are to increase economic growth rates of GDP and GDP per capita to 7.5 per cent and 5.1 per cent, he said, adding that efficient use of existing productive capacity, while increasing it, is the key to achieving these growth rates.

"This will be the key to Bangladesh's pursuit in graduating out of the LDC group," Debapriya said. The other challenges are to ensure that this growth is pro-poor so that the issue of income inequality is tackled and increasing labour productivity, especially in the non-agriculture sector, he added.

Increasing adult literacy and enrollment in tertiary education rates are necessary to improve human capital, the CPD executive

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FDI increases not in real sense

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh lined up behind some of the war-torn and vulnerable countries to become the ninth largest foreign direct investment (FDI) recipient among the least developed countries (LDC) in 2004.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of CPD said Bangladesh might even be at the bottom of 20 such countries when it comes to per capita FDI inflow because "per capita FDI inflow in Bangladesh was only \$3.3".

According to a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) report released yesterday, net FDI inflow in the LDC countries was \$10.7 billion in 2004 while Bangladesh received \$460.4 million, which was only four percent of the total FDI inflow.

Angola was the highest recipient of net FDI inflow with \$2,047 million in 2004, followed by Equatorial Guinea with \$1,664 million, Sudan \$1,511 million, D.R. Congo \$900 million, Myanmar \$556 million, Ethiopia \$545 million, Chad \$478 million, and Tanzania \$470 million, the report said.

'Unctad's LDC Report 2006: Developing Productive Capacity' was simultaneously released

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Saudis hint at \$400m deal for Rupali shares

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The visiting Saudi investment team hinted at spending about \$400 million to buy 67 per cent shares of the state-owned Rupali Bank, sources said.

The Saudi delegation, on behalf of Saudi Prince Bandar Bin Mohammed Bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, made the indication at meetings with the Bangladesh Bank (BB) governor, Privatisation Commission chairman and finance secretary in the last two days.

They also showed interest in investing around \$6 billion in tourism, energy sector, oil refinery and hospitality services in Bangladesh, sources said.

"They want to start investing in Bangladesh through Rupali Bank and gradually expand to other sectors," Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed told reporters yesterday after a closed-door meeting with the

Saudi team.

A member of the Saudi delegation said they think Rupali Bank will be a profitable venture as it has a strong network of branches even in remote areas of the country. He said besides the business sector, the Saudi prince wants to involve in Bangladesh's social welfare as well.

BB deputy governors Nazrul Huda and Ziaul Hasan Siddiqui were present at the meeting while Yousuf Hamed Garzal, prime consultant to the Saudi prince, led the four-member Saudi delegation.

The Saudi team, which leaves Dhaka today, met the Privatisation Commission chairman and finance secretary on Wednesday.

The government that owns 94 per cent of Rupali Bank's shares decided to sell 67 per cent of the shares.

Seven companies from home and abroad, including the Saudi prince, were short-listed by the Privatisation Commission as

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Citizens' body to place its recommendations to PM, Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Nagorik Committee 2006 has sought appointment of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina for placing before them the recommendations for electoral and political reforms made by people at its eight regional dialogues.

The civil society body formed with eminent citizens of the country at a national dialogue in Dhaka on March 20 and campaigning for clean candidates sent letters to the PM and opposition leader on Tuesday seeking their appointments.

The letter said over 2,500 people

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Humanitarian disaster looms in Lebanon

Israel hints at full-scale invasion as ground troops battle Hezbollah

AFF, REUTERS, Beirut/Jerusalem

Israeli ground troops battled Lebanese guerrillas and warplanes bombed a suspected Hezbollah bunker yesterday as Lebanon issued a desperate plea for international help after the bloodiest day of the conflict.

Israel will launch a full-scale ground operation in Lebanon if necessary, Defence Minister Amir Peretz warned yesterday amid intense fighting.

"If we reach the conclusion that the ground operation is necessary, we will do it. Let no terror organisation feel we would cower from any operation," he said during a tour of towns hit by Hezbollah rocket fire.

"We have no intention of conquering Lebanon, but if we will have to act in order to complete our tasks and reach a victory we will do it without thinking twice," Peretz said.

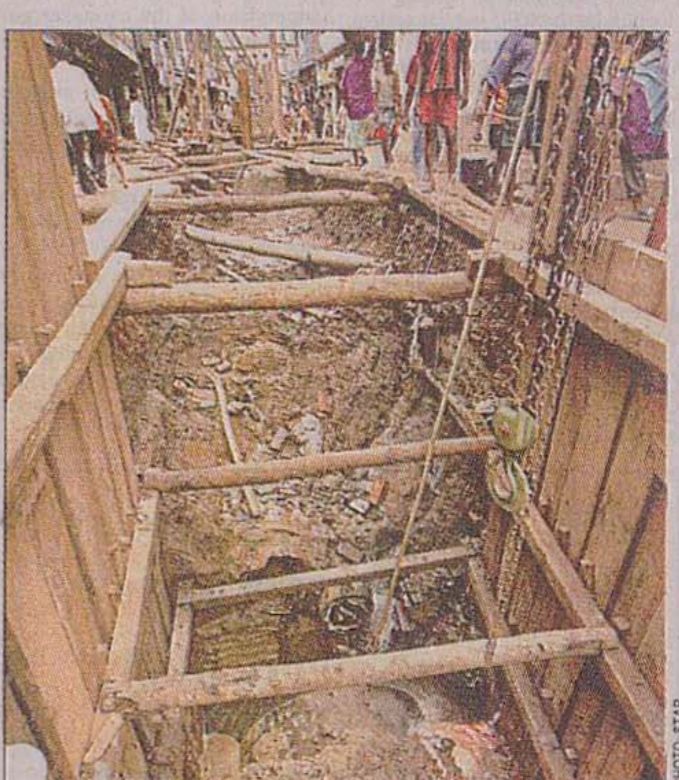
Hizbollah fought fierce battles with Israeli troops on the Lebanese border yesterday. Al Jazeera television said four Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting.

An Israeli military source said there had been Israeli casualties but gave no details. He said one Hizbollah fighter had been killed. Israeli media reported eight soldiers wounded.

The firefight took place just inside Lebanon, near an area where Hizbollah guerrillas killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded nine inside Lebanon on Wednesday.

General Alon Friedman, from Israel's northern command, told army radio that troops concentrated on the northern border with Lebanon "are of more than division strength and would allow a

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Digging on Dhakeswari Road in Old Dhaka started in May but a snail's pace in completing the work left residents of the area in persisting hazards for months.

14-party calls Saifur-CEC discord a 'new drama'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition combine yesterday alleged that the alliance government as part of its 'new drama' is speaking against the chief election commissioner (CEC) and two 'politically' appointed election commissioners to show that the Election Commission (EC) is neutral.

The allegation came in the wake of the finance minister's reported dispute with the CEC over fund allocation for voter list.

By speaking against the CEC and two other commissioners, the coalition government wants to prove that it does not want them. And at the same time they are trying to project the CEC and the two others as neutral persons.

Awami League (AL) Presidium

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