Gunmen kidnap 17 in Baghdad after new security plan

REUTERS, Baghdad

Gunmen in police uniforms kidnapped 17 people from a central Baghdad apartment building in broad daylight yesterday, Interior Ministry sources said, highlighting lawlessness afflicting the country.

The latest abductions came a day after President Bush and Irag's prime minister agreed in Washington that more U.S. and Iragi troops will move into the city to try to curb sectarian violence that has raised fears of all-out civil war.

The kidnappers abducted 10 men, five women and two children from different families living in the building, hours after Bush conceded at a White House news conference that violence in the Iraqi capital was

Militants and criminal gangs all carry out kidnappings in Iraq, but most of the abductions that can run into dozens of people have sectarian motivations.

Many victims are found dead with bullet wounds and signs of torture in a country where 100 people are killed every day accordng to the latest estimates from the United Nations.

The new security plan agreed by Bush and Nuri al-Maliki was an acknowledgement that the Shi'ite Islamist prime minister's recensecurity crackdown in the capita had failed

Two months after being sworn in, Maliki is struggling to find a formula to ease sectarian tensions and keep

It was unclear how the new plan would affect Pentagon hopes of reducing U.S. troops in Iraq by ar's end. Republicans had hoped a troop reduction would help them deflect voter anger over Iraq in November elections when they are fighting to keep control of the U.S. Congress.

There are now 127,000 American troops in Iraq.
B A G H D REINFORCEMENTS

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the increase in forces in the Baghdad area will be "more than hundreds," but was no more

The range of violence in Iraq on Wednesday showed how difficult it might be to ease bloodshed, which has forced 162,000 people to claim aid as refugees in their own country and seen many thousands of others flee the country.

Aside from the kidnappings violence included gunmen shooting at a police convoy in Nahrawan, south of Baghdad. Gunmen on a motorcycle sprayed three men with bullets at a wedding ceremony in the sources said. In Baghdad, gunmen abducted

olice Brigadier Abdullah Hmood, the director of the residency office, police sources said.

It was a very quiet day by Iraq's

good Muslims, then let all the

American soldiers be buried in the

soil of Iraq and never let them return

presence would breach Mr Blair's

zero tolerance' policy for so-called

she would table questions to the

Foreign Office about the position of

"One argued that Mr Saidee's

"Labour MP Louise Ellman said

"I'm horrified that he is being

lowed to come. His stance is

incompatible with the Prime

Minister's statement and I am

amazed that at this time we are

allowing somebody whose com-

ments are so inflammatory to be

here. I am surprised that the East

London Mosque is associating itself

with him. They should answer for

their decision," the newspaper

whose book "Celsius 7/7" sets out

what he claims are the British gov-

ernment's failures to tackle the

threat of Islamist extremism, said,

'Allowing Delwar Hossain Saidee to

preach in London just days after the

anniversary of 7/7 is not conducive

to building good community rela

tions and a secure, tolerant, and

Islami, is an Islamist movement with

ties to extremists whose agenda is

published similar stories on the

refuted the allegations brought by

the British media saving those were

"politically motivated" and "untrue".

General of Jamaat Mohammad

Kamaruzzaman said. "We had a talk

with the British deputy high commis-

sioner in Dhaka and we expressed

our concern about the reports and

influencing the British media for the

"untrue" information, he told The

not seen the Channel 4 film yet but

A lobbyist group from Dhaka is

Kamaruzzaman claimed to have

Saidee, who also claimed to

Saidee admitted to saying some-

However, although Saidee was

Sources in London said Saidee

had to flee in the face of attacks by

the British media, but Saidee

refuted saying, "I got fever after

"My medical check-up, for which

go there every year, was com-

But Kamaruzzaman said Saidee

Sources said Saidee collects

pleted and my party also asked me

went to London on July 5 and

funds from London for himself and

his party, but Saidee denied the

claim, saying, "I never bring the

money home--the funds are used

for the mosques and other Islamic

come back home," he said.

arriving in London.

returned on July 15.

activities in the UK."

scheduled to open a housing fair,

speak at East London Mosque and

address a couple of rallies in

cutting some of the programmes.

said was symbolic," he said.

have not seen the film, said he

heard that he was portrayed as a

the film against our leader "

Daily Star Tuesday evening.

Senior Assistant Secretary

He added: "His party, Jamaat-e-

The Telegraph and The Sun also

Meanwhile, Jamaat and Saidee

multi-ethnic society.

anti-democratic.'

Tory frontbencher Michael Gove,

to their homes.'

'preachers of hate

Jamaat MP Saidee

accused Saidee's detractors of being politically biased and said that his exclusion could jeopardise support from mainstream Muslims for the Government's anti-terrorism agenda," Times Online said.

"In leaked emails seen by The Times, the Home Office sought advice from research analysts in the Foreign Office while considering the case for excluding Saidee," it said.

"Internal messages between advisers discussed the threat that he allegedly posed," Times Online said, quoting Saidee as saying in a report of a Bangladeshi human rights organisation that Britain and the US "deserve all that is coming to them" for overturning the Taleban in Afghanistan.

'The email from one adviser. Eric Taylor, continues: 'He [Mr Saidee] has made a particularly offensive comment about Bangladeshi Hindus...He also appears to defend attacks against the Ahmadiyya (Islamist) community," the online media said.

It also cited several incidents of violence caused by his visits in the UK earlier and mentioned that a Bangladeshi group "wrote to the Prince of Wales in June 2004 appealing for Saidee to be banned from the UK".

Mockbul Ali, however, in an email defended Saidee from being excluded, terming him a "mainstream Muslim figure" and saying, "Any steps taken on his exclusion from the UK must take that into account, especially at a time when we require increasing support on the Prevent/Counter Terrorism agenda from British Muslims,

Times Online read. "Taylor responded that the file against Saidee was 'thoroughly referenced' and disputed whether the exclusion of an extremist cleric would endanger support from mainstream Muslims. He added: 'In the Prime Minister's words, the rules of the game have changed. What may have been tolerated pre-7/7 is

no longer the case.' "However, despite his stronaly worded response, no further action appears to have been taken by the Government "said Times Online

Murad Qureshi, a member of the London Assembly and the Metropolitan Police Authority, criticised the government's inaction "I've been saying since the late 1990s that it doesn't help to have characters like him passing through Britain," he said.

termed filmmaker Martin Bright a "The anguish he causes in the "proven anti-Muslim". "He made Bangladeshi community is not productive and his visa should be some twists of Saidee's speech to turn a 'fart into a nuke' to tarnish his revoked. There are some very image," he added. serious allegations over his head

about war crimes," he added. The Observer on July 9 published a commentary headlined "The Foreign Office ought to be serving Britain, not radical Islam"

controversial person and the writings in the media do not have any criticising the government for allowing Saidee to enter the UK. factual base. Refuting Mockbul who called thing like what has been shown in Saidee a "mainstream" figure, it said, "He [Saidee] isn't, he's a the film but could not remember the

fantastically controversial figure exact words he used. "Whatever among British Bengalis. [Martin] Bright interviews Bengali leaders who regard him as a malign extremist and cannot understand why the Foreign Office wants him to preach Islamist radicalism to their children. London and Luton, he left early

Daily Mail in its story titled "Extremist linked cleric given green light to enter Britain" on July 13 said, "MPs expressed outrage today after it emerged that Saidee has been given a visa despite boasting that England 'has it coming' for its role in

Afghanistan."
It said, "...his visit could be disrupted by protests after a previous appearance was dogged by vio-

It criticised the government saying, "Saidee's presence flies in the face of Tony Blair's assurance in the wake of the July 7 bombings that the 'rules have changed' and that the presence of extremist preachers

would no longer be tolerated." About Saidee's preaching, Daily Mail said. "Saidee has called for American soldiers in Iraq to convert to Islam or die, declaring: 'And if it is

Road march

Jatrabari areas as sensitive from security point of view, the law enforcers took additional security measurers. A senior police official said they did so in view of the earlier agitation for power and water. Police, Rapid Action Battalion

ntelligence agencies were deployed along the march route. Rab personnel stood guard on

(Rab), paramilitary BDR and

the roofs of high-rise buildings while a Rab helicopter hovered above, closely observing the The law enforcers set up a

number of barricades on the busy Dhaka- Chittagong Highway causing immense sufferings to commu-No public and private vehicles,

except ambulance and vehicles carrying journalists and law enforcers, were allowed to ply the march route from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. Rickshaws however plied as usual.

As the starting point of the march virtually turned into a human sea, the opposition combine held a brief rally there. A number of senior opposition leaders including Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, Rashed Khan Menon and Hasanul Hague Inu addressed the rally.

They reiterated the demand for immediate resignation of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and two other 'politically appointed' election commissioners, and implementation of electoral reforms. The road march would be turned into 'victory march' to compel the alliance government to accept the demands, they said.

The also reiterated that they would not accept a voter list prepared under the present CEC. A new CEC has to be appointed on the basis of a consensus reached through discussions.

A brief rally followed the march, which was addressed by, among others, Mohammad Nasim, Motia chowdhury and Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya. Motia formally declared end of the march.

All 25 accused

FROM PAGE 16

Ahmed and Didarul Alam--were gunned down by a gang of armed criminals at Farhadabad playground at Jabbar Ali Hat in Hathazari on December 8, 1991. At least 50 people, who were watching a football game, were also injured in he attack

Awami League Leader Kazi Mohsin Chowdhury filed a case. accusing 36 people including Shibir Nasir Uddin and lobal.

Later, the charge sheet was submitted on November 4, 1992 accusing 25 people and charge was framed against the accused on April 1, 2002. The court completed the hearing of the case on July 6 this

Asian meet

FROM PAGE 16

need to understand what are the issues so they can take the desired action," said Pandey.

"In all our countries we haven't necessarily reached the level of communication we need."

The arrival of the disease in western India earlier this year led to the culling of more than a million birds by health authorities. The country hopes to regain bird-flu free status in August, if no new cases are

Bird flu has claimed 133 lives worldwide since 2003, according to WHO figures, with Indonesia and Vietnam suffering the most with 42 deaths each.

Badiuzzaman Ferdous, the rally

was also addressed, among others,

by.Prime Minister's Political

Secretary Harris Chowdhury, State

Minister for Women and Children's

Affairs Alamgir Kabir, State Minister

for Agriculture Igbal Hassan

Mahmud, Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur

Rahman Minu MP and local MP

gurated a bridge over Hura Sagor by

The Bangladeshi government had earlier asked the IOM to evacuate

Lebanon-based Bangladeshis, who

are mostly engaged in the hotel,

"Since receiving the request

from Bangladesh's government, we

have opened registration for evacu-

ation for the willing foreign nation-

als. But many Bangladeshis have

refused to register their names," the

foreigners, have been killed in

fighting between Israeli forces and

the Lebanon-based militant group

More than 400 people, including

construction and textile sectors.

Bangladeshis

Earlier, the prime minister inau-

Justice Mozammel Huq.

unveiling a plaque.

FROM PAGE 1

official said.

PM tells rally FROM PAGE 16

trend of development.

may be submitted to the IMF by

prime minister urged people to elect the BNP-led alliance candidates in the upcoming polls to keep up the prices of kerosene and diesel by 10 Chaired by Local BNP President

The IMF estimated that the government incurred a loss of about \$800 million in June despite the fuel price hike. It said the loss has further increased in recent days due to the ongoing hike of fuel prices in inter-

ment to adjust the huge loss caused by subsidy to fuel prices either by increasing the fuel prices or providing budgetary allocation. It asked the government to notify it of the

A finance ministry official said considering the upcoming elections, the government hinted the IMF that it will not go for further increase of fuel prices and the loss could be adjusted with funds kept in the budget as "block allocation".

Earlier in May, the IMF mission said its executive board will consider approval of the loan in July if the government implements the policies aimed at macroeconomic stability and improves the financial position. It also prescribed to carry out some key reforms in state owned enterprises, nationalised commercialised banks and the

In 2003, the IMF executive board approved the PRGF loans in seven tranches subject to some condichances" of success in Rome

BNP satisfied district and thana election officers of

completed in time."

"The BNP wants a flawless voter list and the Election Commission assured us that the voter list will be prepared in time." the minister said.

The demand for the CEC's resignation was not discussed at the meeting, he said.

"Why will he [CEC] resign? It is a constitutional post and he is moving as per the constitution," Anwar said, adding, "Who are demanding his resignation? Only one such political party has people's support while the others do not enjoy remarkable support from people. As Secretary of the EC

Secretariat Abdur Rashid Sarkar raised the issue of allocation of funds for updating the voter list, the agriculture minister said the fund will be allocated soon, meeting sources Amid uncertainty of fund alloca-

tion from the finance ministry, the task of updating the voter list got off a slow start on last Friday. Election commissioners Justice

Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaira also attended the meeting. "They [the BNP delegation]

inquired about the progress of updating the voter list," the EC secretary told reporters after the Meanwhile, the EC yesterday held a meeting with the deputy

commissioner of Dhaka district,

Dhaka, and zonal officers of Dhaka City Corporation to gear up the task of updating the voter list in the capital.

The task of updating the voter list is going on smoothly and it will be hopefully completed by August 10, the EC secretary told reporters after

BSF

without provocation at BDR of Hijaldi outpost in Kalaroa upazila yesterday after noon. No casualties have been reported following the

BDR has been put on alert and additional troops have been mobilised along the 138 km-long border

Iwo energy

Petroleum Mahbub Un Noor and

Ashfaqul Haq are accused of having illegally supplied fuel oils worth crores of taka to dealers. The authorities have transferred

Baghabari depot chief Farukuzzaman Biswas to Chittagong as his expenses were found higher than his income. Farukuzzaman owns two palatial houses in Dhaka and Jessore and has other assets that do not match

'Un'intended fallout

names of who enjoy certain level of

respectability in our society. That is why all this attempt to hide them from public scrutiny.

But what happened then is more pathetic -- the 'un'intended fallout of whitening of black money. Suddenly hints are being dropped about people who allegedly had whitened money. Interestingly, many of the names that are being suggested have been ardent critics of this whole process of money whitening. Some of these persons are now involved in various initiatives of the civil society. Against such a systematic rumour campaign against these persons, they remain helpless in the face of the government's resistance to disclose the names of the persons who whitened money.

This rumour mongering has all the more strengthened the case for making public the list of persons who whitened black money. This is more important in case of politicians intending to contest the upcoming general elections because the people, majority of whom are villagers and cut off from the city events have the right to know who they are voting for. The hordes of television channels that are mushrooming overnight by the touch of a magic wand also needs to be scrutinized to detect how the owners of these channels amassed their wealth overnight to get into such costly ventures. This is important because television channels, although privately owned, are public property by the nature of their operation and licensing and will play an important role in forming opinion during the

And there is also another side to the coin. In the past years, there have been a lot of strong protestations against NGOs getting into business on the ground that these NGOs have access to easy money at soft terms. Some of them are also 'exempted' from tax. As such, when the NGOs get into business, they skew the market as the normal commercial ventures have to borrow costly money from banks and

BD Foods

image and harmed the economy of the country by smuggling heroin to Britain. The process of investigation will suffer if he is enlarged on bail at this stage, contended the attorney.

IMF defers

FROM PAGE 16

August, the source added. The IMF also did not consider the recent increases in fuel prices sufficient. In the first week of June, the government increased the

per cent and petrol and octane by 30

national market. The IMF suggested the govern-

But is not the whitening of money

giving rise to a similar kind of distort ing phenomenon in the industrial development? Those who have got their money whitened at a much cheaper rate than the honest taxpayers, will have a higher competitive edge in their investment. Someone who paid only 7.5 percent tax will have a much better product pricing capacity than someone who paid 25 percent tax. Shouldn't the nation know who these people are and where they invested their money in? Now the 7.5 percent tax payment system was discontinued this year, the whitening process through investments in houses, land and car continues. It is no wonder that apartments in the range of Tk 1 crore to Tk 5 crore are suddenly in great demand, as reported by some newspapers. The buyers of such costly properties can any time sell their assets and use the capital gains in other ventures, thus leaving the scope for skewing the invest-

ment scenario. In the past, both the military and political governments have used various 'neutralising and carrot' tools to satisfy the people of consequence. They have either taken them into the government fold or given them special 'facilities' in business. Now the money whitening offer is only one of them. What might come in future is the selective use of the list to treat the people of 'nuisance' value. And that process as it seems, has already started. To safeguard this class, the NBR, even if it cannot disclose the names of the black money holders, can give certificates to vouch that somebody did not whiten any money at all.

PM

FROM PAGE 1

Khaleda suggested enhancing trade and investment between the two countries. She said Turkey can import RMG, pharmaceuticals and ceramic products from Bangladesh.

Referring to her recent visit to Turkey the prime minister said the decisions, which were taken during talks with the Turkish leaders should be followed up for mutual benefits.

About her government's stance against terrorism, the prime minister said some misguided people unleashed terrorism in the name of Islam. But the government has

Delegation members Harun Tufekei, Semesttin Murat, Faruk Ambarcioglu and Yilmaz Kaya were

Rice warns

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regime."

Referring to the Syrian president, Chirac said: "There was a time when I spoke to Bashar al-Assad. I spoke to his father. To hide nothing from you, this dialogue came to an end. It was he who wanted it.

"And then, I realised that it was coming to nothing. That the regime embodied by Bashar al-Assad seemed to me to be at odds with security and peace." In a reference to the abduction of Israeli soldiers by Hamas and

take decisions "to put an end to the

crimes of the Zionist regime".

Hezbollah, which sparked the Israel-Lebanon conflict, Chirac spoke of his "feeling" that "Hamas as well as Hezbollah did not take these irresponsible initiatives simply Dhaka. The proposals include of their own accord". establishment of South Asian Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi said before the Rome conference ended he was

"not optimistic" about the meeting, because of the "role played by the United States and the (UN) Security mit in Dhaka, he added. Council in favour of the Zionist Morshed said the Saarc finance He hoped the conference would

He also criticised the failure to invite Iran and Syria to the talks, saying "the absence of certain countries could not help the

CIA chief

FROM PAGE 16 national security.

"Why should our laws make it more difficult to target al Qaeda communications that are most important to us -- those entering or leaving this country," said Hayden, an Air Force general who set up the administration's eavesdropping program in 2001 as director of the National Security Agency.

Congress is debating how to accommodate the legally questionable NSA eavesdropping program by changing the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA requires individual court

warrants for all intelligence-related eavesdropping in the United States. But the NSA program, which

began shortly after the September 11 attacks and was disclosed in December by The New York Times allows the government to eavesdrop on the international phone calls and emails of U.S. citizens without first obtaining a warrant, if in pursuit of al Qaeda. The CIA director backed compro-

House and Senate Judiciary Chairman Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania that would allow a secret FISA court to review the NSA program to determine its legality. Critics say the proposal would

mise legislation between the White

allow FISA judges to move away from individual warrants, a keystone of U.S. civil liberties protections, by granting blanket approval to entire eavesdropping programs. Hayden said the compromise

proposal would provide effective new criteria for government surveillance efforts "The FISA regime from 1978

onward focused on specific court

orders, against individual targets ..

that was well suited to stable, foreign entities," Hayden said. "It is not as well suited to detect and prevent attacks against the homeland," he added

He also urged lawmakers to provide protection for private sector telecommunications companies that participate in government eavesdropping. Specter and other lawmakers

have questioned the legality of the

eavesdropping program, saying it

appears to violate FISA and may overstep Bush's constitutional authorities as commander in chief. Bush has defended the program. saving he had the power in war time

to protect the nation Last week, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales told Specter's committee that Bush blocked a Justice Department investigation of the NSA program.

Gonzales said the president refused to give the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility access to the classified program. The office announced in May it was unable to conduct an investigation into the role department lawyers had in developing the eavesdropping program.

Bangla Bhai

FROM PAGE 1 and said he is a close associate of 'Bangla Bhai' and has been regrouping the outlawed Jama'atul

Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB)

militants on the run. Rab members also apprehended several other JMB activists from Hamirkutsa, Sakoa, Goalkandi, Udpara, Polashi and Khatalbaria while Sattar Master's brother,

another suspect, managed to flee.

Afghanistan

FROM PAGE 16 The Standing Committee, comprising the foreign secretaries, will approve the Saarc budget for 2007 at the meeting and review the activities of different technical commit-

tees and working groups. The foreign secretaries will also provide guidelines for increasing activities in areas of cooperation among the member states in commerce, finance, communications and energy sectors.

The Standing Committee meet will be followed by the 27th Council of Ministers meeting on August 1 and 2. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the meeting at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Foreign ministry sources said the Council of Ministers meeting would approve the guidelines concerning Saarc observers and guests, new observers and other recommendations of the Standing Committee. Briefing newsmen at the airport before his departure for Kuala

Lumpur to attend the ARF meeting Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said the Council of Ministers would also consider the formal applications of South Korea, USA and EU to become the Saarc observers. Besides, the council will review implementation of various proposals made at the 13th summit in

University and sponsoring South Asian Car Rally. The council will also review the reports of Saarc ministerial meetings so far held since the last sum-

ministers meeting held recently in Islamabad approved the framework of the South Asian Development Fund, which will start functioning with initial capital of \$300 million.

The foreign minister said the Dhaka Summit and its follow-up actions have proved that a new dynamism has been created in the

Rome meet fails

short of meeting UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's plea for an 'immediate cessation of hostilities" to stop the killing, with nearly 400 people in Lebanon, mostly civilians,

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has rejected calls for an immediate ceasefire backed by many US allies in Europe and the Middle East, saying root causes must be addressed first

"We are all agreed that we want most urgently to end the violence on a basis that this time will be sustainable. Because unfortunately this is a region that has had too many broken ceasefires," she said. "We do have a way forward," she

said, referring to UN resolution 1559, which calls for the disarming and disbanding of all militias, including Hezbollah, and for the Lebanese government to assert its authority over all its territory. Much of southern Lebanon is controlled by

The conference set out no concrete steps for implementing the UN resolution, however.

"We all committed to dedicated and urgent action to try to bring about an end to this violence that indeed would be sustainable and that would leave the Lebanese government with the prospect of full control of its country," Rice said.

"We cannot return to the statusquo ante.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy lamented the failure to agree on an immediate ceasefire.

There was no agreement and we agreed to work in a very urgent way for a cessation of hostilities. We would have liked the word 'immediate' more than the word 'urgent' in the text," he said. A disappointed Lebanese Prime

Minister Fuad Siniora, who had pressed for an immediate ceasefire. told a news conference that "some progress" had been made, but much remains to be done. The meeting was held just hours

in southern Lebanon, killing four UN observers. Ministers held a minute's silence for the dead. "The death and destruction we have witnessed in the past two weeks including yesterday's tragic killing of UN peacekeepers compels this conference to send a strong

message and to speak with one

after an Israeli air raid hit a UN post

voice," Annan said as it opened "A temporary cessation of hostilities would offer crucial hours and days for essential humanitarian

Rice warned Syria and Iran that it

was time for those countries to

Middle East peace.

The international community would work to "try to gain an understanding from other states that they have responsibilities too" in ending

make a choice."
The US secretary of state said ministers had agreed to make urgent efforts to deal with the humanitarian situation. "We will continue to work with the United Nations and with all to alleviate the

she said An Italian foreign ministry spokesman said there was much discussion at the talks about the deployment of an internationa buffer force to guarantee lasting

Most countries at the conference have backed the idea of a buffer force, but there are differences over its composition and the conditions

"The mandate of the security force will be discussed over the next several days." Rice told journalists in Rome. "We have asked for urgent meetings to take place so that a

Govt fears further

FROM PAGE 1

In the wake the August 17 countrywide bomb attacks last year, the people, just as the law enforcers, wanted capture of the militants especially the top ones, as militancy appeared to be the most

suicide bombers carried out blasts in different districts to destroy the existing democratic order and to publicise their vendetta.

making body of the militant outfit. But many other top JMB leaders Ehsars (who are recruited on ful time basis and act at the directives of their superiors), Gayeri Ehsars (part-timers), members of the

security dragnet. Sources said these JMB men are now reorganising their workers across the country, especially in the northern and north-eastern

4 UN observers

I am shocked and deeply distressed by the apparently deliberate targeting by Israeli Defence Forces of a UN observer post in southern Lebanon that has killed two UN military observers, with two more

Israel's UN ambassador Dan the UN post at Khiam and surprised

assertions. "The secretary general, while demanding an investigation, has

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert however phoned Annan and expressed "deep regrets" over the killing and said he would order a comprehensive inquiry.

But Malaysian Foreign Minister

Nations had condemned Israeli aggression, said: "I think it is very easy to express deep regret after the event. France, whose officers command the 28-year-old UN Interim Forces in Lebanon force, also protested, and China, one of whose

"Nothing can justify Israel's attack on a UN observer base.

bodies had so far been recovered from the remains of the post in Khiam, once the site of an infamous Israeli jail but now a Hezbollah stronghold. Intense efforts were underway to recover the final body from beneath the rubble, the source

from Hezbollah, whose capture of Lebanon.

appearance early Wednesday following repeated attempts by Israel to kill him in bombing raids

Israel has repeatedly said believes the Shiite militant group has longer-range rockets capable of reaching beyond Israel's third city, as far as the commercial capital Tel Aviv, or even the southern city of

least six people.

role of Iran. It is high time that people

the violence in Lebanon, Rice said. "Syria has a responsibility," Rice said. "And we are deeply concerned, as we have said, about the

suffering of the Lebanese people,

security in southern Lebanon.

under which it should be deployed.

force can be put together.

nilitant activities.

dangerous menace. The panic climaxed as JMB

The people had a sigh of relief as the law enforcers captured JMB chief Abdur Rahman, the other top leader Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai and five other members of Majlish-e-Shura, the highest policy-

suicide squads and their district evel leaders are still outside the

feared dead," Annan said. Gillerman, apparently parroting Annan's initial phrase, told the BBC: 'I was shocked and deeply distressed by the hasty statement by the secretary general insinuating that Israel has deliberately targeted

at these premature and erroneous

already issued his conclusions.

Syed Hamid Albar speaking on Wednesday after a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian

called in the Israeli ambassador in Beiiing to demand a formal apology. A Lebanese security source said the other three observers were an Austrian, a Canadian and a Finn. Finnish President Taria Halonen also demanded an investigation:

nationals was among the dead,

The Lebanese source said three

two Israeli soldiers earlier in July sparked the Israeli onslaught of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah vowed to hit back with rocket attacks into the heart of Israel as he made a new television

There was no sign of any let-up

"We are entering a new phase in the confrontation, the phase of (striking) beyond Haifa," Nasrallah said, referring to Israel's main northern town, already pounded with deadly rocket fire by Hezbollah over the past two weeks.

Beersheva. Several rockets landed on Wednesday on Haifa, wounding at

In a flickering sign of some relief

for Lebanese trapped by Israel's

declared blockade of the whole

country, a Jordanian military plane

carrying UN humanitarian aid landed at Beirut airport. The flight was the first to land after a two-week closure caused by

Israel's bombardment of the airport at the start of its offensive It also came as the UN food body the FAO, said Lebanon was heading for a "major food crisis"

Much of the country's infrastruc-

ture lies in ruins from Israeli bombing and food, fuel and medical supplies have been disrupted with an estimated 500,000 Lebanese displaced. In the southern Lebanese town of Tyre, a rescue official told AFP that at least 55 people, mostly

civilians and including many children, remained buried under rubble in the region after more than 10 days of intense Israeli raids. Lebanese Civil Defence rescue coordinator Salam Daher said the figure was likely to be much higher

as Israeli attacks on roads in the region made access by teams risky impossible. It was not immediately known how many of them were dead or still

alive and waiting to be reached by rescue workers. In one incident, 20 residents of the village of Srifa were still under the ruins of five houses completely destroyed in the heavy Israeli ai and sea bombardment on July 19 when 25 civilians were reported

"Someone who escaped,

wounded, managed to reach the

neighbouring village of Tarifilsay

and gave details on the families who were in their houses during the bombardment. There must be 20 more bodies underneath the rubble," he said.

killed. Daher said.

15 KILLED IN GAZA

A young Palestinian man was killed by Israeli fire in the northern Gaza Strip, bringing to 15 the number of people to have died in raids in the territory yesterday, a hospital official said. The man, in his early 20s and

described as "simple" by medical

sources was killed by tank fire, the

source said. Another 14 Palestinians were killed east of Gaza City, at least six of them named militants from the armed wings of governing Hamas, which claimed joint responsibility for

Islamic Jihad.

At least 131 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier have died since Israel stepped up its ground offensive on July 5 to recover the missing soldier and end the firing of rockets at Israeli territory, according to an AFP count.

the capture of an Israeli soldier, and

Yesterday's latest death brings to 5,275 the number of people killed since the start of the intifada in September 2000, most of them Palestinians, according to another