## BNP out to rope in Ershad

prime minister and government policy makers about the alliance's winning the next polls. The BNP stalwarts and senior ministers have repeatedly been claiming that the alliance would again have a landslide victory in the election and that the main opposition Awami League (AL) is heading for a polls debacle for their anti-people stance and

But grassroots level leaders of the BNP do not subscribe to the party high commands' claim. They have warned the party high ups time and again that their party will face would face serious hurdles in the next election if the situation arising out of the persisting acute shortage of power and price spiral of essentials does not improve.

The ruling coalition has also failed to meet its election pledge to fight graft and other forms of corruption in the government and the administration. It has not punished anyone for graft. And Bangladesh has been branded the most corrupt country for the fourth consecutive year of the coalition rule.

Now, can the government claim that the situation has improved?

Many political observers believe that the ruling coalition has lost people's confidence due to its failure to keep its promises. So, it needs a greater alliance that includes JP (Frshad) to avoid a debacle in the next polls and prevent the AI - led opposition combine from expanding it by inducting that party into it.

The four-party alliance bagged 46 per cent votes while the AL alone secured 40.13 per cent and JP (Ershad) 7.25 per cent in the last election

#### **VOICE OF GRASSROOTS LEADERS**

Meanwhile, as many as 2,900 leaders of district, upazila and municipality units of the BNP in six divisions attended the October 15-16 meeting and Iftar party at the Prodhanmontri Bhaban in the capital last vear

"The price hike of essentials and shortage of power have badly affected people's lives in the last days of this government," said Taiyebur Rahman, president of Thakurgaon upazila BNP, at the meeting on October 15. "We will have to face a tough time in the next polls if the situation does not improve," he told the gathering of fellow leaders from 36 districts of Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions.

General Secretary of Dinajpur district BNP Ashraful Alam said at the meeting the rural people were experiencing an acute power crisis. "The government's achievements in

that it was facing stiffer opposition in

remains Sunni insurgents but the

coalition is now drawn increasingly

into clashes with powerful Shia mili-

This trend is all the more ominous

given that US commanders have

decided to put around 4,000 additional

troops into the mainly-Shia capital to

try to halt a surge in murderous bomb

and gun attacks by rival sectarian

gangs.
Just southeast of the capital, police

found at least 12 civilian corpses, most

of them kidnapping victims who had

Tayaran Square market in the center

of the city when a bomb exploded.

indiscriminately targeting civilians. A

second attack in a northern suburb

Such attacks have in recent weeks

hurt three police and three bystanders.

pushed the capital into chaos and

seriously damaged the authority of

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's embat-

tled government, a unity coalition of

bolster homegrown attempts to regain

control, in part by deploying an addi-

tional brigade of combat troops

equipped with Stryker armoured cars

But fighting has also continued to

On Saturday, six people were killed

in various attacks around Baquba,

including a police officer and a soldier,

while three more civilians were kid-

napped just outside the restive north-

A Katyusha rocket was fired into

deposed Iraqi leader Saddam

Hussein's hometown, Tikrit, killing a

woman. Four more civilians were killed

in the ethnically-mixed oil city of Kirkuk

when a bomb went off by a petrol

BBC Bengali Service that the

remaining Bangladesh nationals.

who have been brought to

Damascus, would be flown home in

Welfare and Overseas Employment

agreed to provide Tk 500 to each of

the returnees," the ambassador

government has the responsibility to

bring her nationals back home if

they want to return from the war-torn

He also said the Bangladesh

"The Ministry of Expatriates'

First batch

FROM PAGE 1

the next two days.

into the city and by stepping up raids.

rage outside Baghdad.

The government's US allies plan to

the main Sunni and Shia factions.

At least 12 people were hurt in

been tortured and shot.

formerly cooperative Shia areas.

rural electrification have been shadowed by the crisis of power. The people are now blaming the government for this crisis.'

Speaking at the second day's meeting. SM Gaznavi, general secretary of Borhanuddin upazila unit of the BNP said the party leaders who did not get any benefits are now aggrieved and those who have been benefited in the last four years are 'acting cautiously'

"Ministers will leave the country if the party fails to win the next election but we will have to stay home and face the adverse situation, Gaznabi said.

On the second day. BNP Standing Committee Member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui expressed similar views and criticised the ministers and party lawmakers who, he said, were keeping away from the field level workers.

"If the ministers and lawmakers eat up everything, what will be left for the other leaders and workers, Tanvir questioned amid clapping from the grassroots leaders.

At a party meeting in Rajshahi on February 9 last year, a local BNP leader blasted the government for price hike of diesel and fertiliser. "Prices of fertiliser and diesel are too high. Farmers blame the government for this," said Subodh Chandra Mandal, organising secretary of Bishnupur unit of the BNP in

'The successes made so far in development sector have faded due to the skyrocketing price of rice,' said Tasikul Islam, president of Jhilim union BNP unit in apainawabgani, at the meeting.

About farm subsidy, Abul Kalam Azad of Dighapara union unit in Natore, told a party meeting on February 8 last year, "Farmers are not getting benefits of the government subsidy of Tk 600 crore." The meeting held at the district town was attended by 2,022 grassroots level

"Most of the election pledges of the party have not been implemented. We cannot reply to people's queries for this failure," Abdur Rafik, president of Kismatnagar union BNP unit in Rajshahi district, said at the February 9 meeting held at Rajshahi stadium, attended by 2,187 grassroots leaders.

Similar issues were raised at such party meetings in Chittagong, Sylhet, Comilla, Mymensingh, Khulna and other places.

In line with the grassroots leaders' views, some ruling BNP lawmakers on several occasions in parliament decried the price hike of essentials and power crisis. **GOVT HIGH UPS' DENIAL** 

Senior ministers present at the

Police also reported that a former

Another civilian was shot dead in

his pickup truck in Samarra, north of

the capital, according to police, who

could not suggest a motive for his

the success of anti-US insurgents

such as those linked to the al-Qaeda

extremist network in poisoning rela-

tions between Irag's Shia majority and

extremists blew up a revered Shia

shrine in the city of Sammara, trigger-

ing tit-for-tat reprisals which quickly

became a self-perpetuating dirty war

Baghdad and religiously-mixed

Shia militias -- which rejoiced at

Saddam's fall and have close ties

with the biggest parties in Maliki's

government -- stand accused of

taking part in sectarian massacres.

Friday that Iraqis should handle their

own security without interference from

others, a veiled reference to US

Shia leader Abdelaziz Hakim said

February, suspected Sunni

formerly politically-dominant Sunni.

The ongoing violence is a sign of

official of the Baath party who worked

4 US Marines killed

The US troops' most deadly foe as a teacher in Nasiriyah, deep in

gunmen

meeting on October 15-16 last year. however denied that there were any crises and advised the grassroots

Even, in April this year, the deputy commissioners (DCs) described the crises of power and agricultural inputs the way the ruling BNP grassroots leaders and lawmakers did on several occasions earlier, warning the government about the situation and demanding urgent steps to

level leaders to portray the govern-

ment's development activities and

But the government did not seem to consider those seriously and consistently claimed the situation was not that bad.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on several occasions said prices of essentials are under control and within people's reach as their purchasing capacity has increased. The slight rise in the prices of some commodities is due to the global market situation, she added.

But senior ministers time and again promised to check the price nike within a time limit

In the face of severe criticism from grassroots leaders at the October meeting, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said, "The prices of essentials will be normal in three

At the same meeting, Bhuiyan and Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman blamed the media for "misreporting" on the price hike of essentials and undermining the government's success. "We will get more seats in the next election by dint of our countrywide development work and tremendous success in different areas," Saifur said. The AL will not get more than 50 seats, ne predicted

On power crisis, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia repeatedly said the situation has improved a lot. Demand for power has increased over the years due to fast industrialisation and new connections across the country. For this, there is a little shortage of power at present, she claimed. She denied that there was any fertiliser crisis and blamed the opposition for creating an artificial

Against this backdrop, it has now become a big guestion if the government claims were true, then why has t become so desperate to win Ershad's support even by disposing of all the cases against him?

### Saarc

and provide observer status to China

For the first time, Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta will attend the Council of Ministers' meeting on August 1-2 on a special invita-tion while the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister will attend the Standing Committee meeting on July 31-August

The special session of the Saarc Standing Committee held in Dhaka last April prepared a set of guidelines on how observers are to associate with the Saarc. The guidelines will be put before the foreign ministers'

under the regional forum.

communication and energy sectors.

Ministers' meeting on August 1.

### BNP, AL

FROM PAGE 16 now become favourite to both BNP and AL, the CPB leaders said.

Chaired by CPB Dhaka City President Mahabub Alam, the rally was addressed, among others, by CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Acting General Secretary Syed Abu Zafar and Ruhin Hossair

### Edible oil

FROM PAGE 1

government should take immediate measures to control the price," said Moulvi Bazar Baboshayee Samity General Secretary Golam Mowla.

The refiners have attributed the situation to the price hike in the international market and unavailability of ships to import oil, he said. adding that the refiners are using these as excuses to do monopoly business in the edible oil market.

"I have already informed the commerce minister of the situation," Mowla said.

Wholesale price of sova bean oil was Tk 1,860 per maund (about 38 kg) yesterday while it was Tk 1,800 last week, Moulvi Bazar Baboshayee Samity said.

"We are now observing the situation and if needed we shall take At the mill gate the refiners back our nationals," the ambassademanded Tk 1,900 for per maund dor added. soya bean oil, they added.

FROM PAGE 16 and Japan.

The Standing Committee comprising the foreign secretaries of the member states will approve the Saarc budget for 2007 at the meeting and review the activities of different technical committees and working groups

The foreign secretaries will also provide guidelines for gearing up activities in commerce, finance,

The Saarc foreign ministers will finalise a 10-year Vision Document containing sector-wise cooperation among the member states.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will naugurate the 27th Saarc Council of

#### JCD-Shibir clash FROM PAGE 16

Soon after the attack, at least 60-70 ICS activists of Dinapur Medical College, Dinajpur Government University College and district ICS unit attacked

JCD activists inside a medical college dormitory. The attack left at least 17 JCD men injured.

Eight of the critically injured were sent to Dinaipur Sadar Hospital. The critically injured were identified as Md Nazrul Islam, 22, Md Khokon, 24, Mosiur. 24. Saiib. 21. Kavsar. 22. Sraban, 22, Raiib, 22 and Raiib, 21,

During the attack, the ICS activists ransacked furniture and smashed windowpanes of at least 20 rooms of a college dormitory. The ICS cadres then attacked

Dinaipur Sadar Hospital around 5:45pm and ransacked the operational theatre (OT), surgery ward and the outdoor section of the hospital causing panic among the patients.

On contact, Rafigul Islam, acting principal of Dinajpur Medical College, said police have been deployed on the campus soon after the incident to prevent further untoward incidents. Students of Dinajpur Medical College Hospital alleged that Md Zahurul Islam, provost of the dormitory, stayed inactive during the attack.

Alarge number of police have been deployed at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital and Dinajpur Sadar Hospital fearing more attacks.

## Tenrgatila blowouts

the Petrobangla claim has no legal

As Niko lost much of its backstage political support with the ouster of state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain, it has recently changed its Bangladeshi operation policy, trimmed manpower and struck a partnership with a local businessman who also runs a news organisation.

Now, the Canadian company has finally agreed to sign the GPSA it

Operating through a controversial joint venture agreement (JVA) with Bapex from 2004, Niko has been refusing Petrobangla's price offer of 1.75 dollar mcf for gas from the Feni marginal gas field. Seeking a price of 2.35 dollar, Niko in late February unilaterally suspended gas production from the Feni field as a blackmail strategy.

However after getting threatened of legal action, Niko resumed gas production from early March and then in April agreed to the Petrobangla's price offer of 1.75 dollar mcf. But soon after initialling the GPSA with Petrobangla, Niko became silent and refrained from penning the final deal.

Last week Niko finally wrote the Petrobangla that the company is ready to sign the GPSA and end the impasse over Feni field.

Industry insiders said that after state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain was ousted from the cabinet for receiving a Tk 1 crore car from Niko, the Canadian company had been restructuring its operation in Bangladesh. Niko changed its anti-media policy and in recent times it has established media relations with the help of a Bangla newspaper editor.

Sources said that since the Canadian company succeeded in striking the JVA without any competitive tender and in violation of various rules. Niko had been flouting rules and regulation in each of its steps. The company evidently gave sidekicks to the ousted state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain while it had blessings from the alternative powerhouse of the government Their undue influence helped

Niko start supplying Feni gas field's gas to the national grid from November 2004 without fixing a price or any GPSA. At that time Petrobangla had offered it 1.75

the Feni gas field. Mosharraf was putting pressure on Petrobangla to agree on a price of 2.15 dollars for the Feni gas. He also forced Petrobangla to illegally pay 4 million dollars to Niko's bank account in April, nearly four months after the first Tengratila blowout.

dollars while Niko was hell-bent on

2.35 dollars. Bapex is the owner of

After the second blowout in Tengratila. Niko was silent on the gas price issue for a while. No sooner did it manage the primary task of drilling a remedial well to seal the blownout gas well than it started demanding payment for Feni gas field again and threatening to stop Feni field production otherwise.

The Feni field was used in the past and then abandoned till Niko undertook a re-drilling programme there. It has been producing gas between 20 million cubic feet per day (mmcfd) to 30 mmcfd while the country consumes over 1450

Niko Country Manager Brian Adolph in an interview with The Daily Star in April had said that the company was worried over the payment as half of the total gas of this field was already supplied to the government without any payment. He claimed that Feni field had a reserve of 25 bcf while it had already given around 13 bcf. Brian added that the company did not agree to the price offer of 1.75 dollar per mcfbut now agreeing to this price as there was no alternative.

Niko was disqualified by the government in the Second Round Block Bidding for oil and gas exploration under PSCs in 1997. But it kept on trying to enter the Bangladeshi gas sector through the backdoor and finally got access to the sector through a hush-hush joint venture deal with Bapex and also through purchasing shares of an American oil company in Block

## Power boss falls

for incompetent contractors in exchange for bribes, making the government swallow its own rules and regulations

Talukder also made the vested nterest lobby very unhappy as he took a position against incompetent Chinese company Harbin for its substandard work in Tongi 80 mw plant which tripped over 75 times in one year since the beginning of its operation, and for its bid manipulation in Fenchuganj 90 mw and Chandpur 150 mw power projects. Besides, he was also closely monitoring the Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh's (EGCB) move to award the 240 mw power project in Siddhirganj to Harbin by going against the project consultant's views.

Sources said a move to axe Talukder was finalised Wednesday and the vested interest group was all set to seek the prime minister's nod on the matter on Thursday. Talukder became aware of the move Thursday afternoon and went to the prime minister and had a one-to-one meeting later that day.

Sources said at the meeting he threatened to resign from the cabinet. Considering political pitfalls, the prime minister refrained from axing him and cautioned him instead, sources at the PMO said without elaboration.

Interestingly, earlier on Thursday morning, an unaware Talukder was speaking at a workshop on power sector financial restructuring where he said unbridled irregularities, misuse of funds and lack of accountability are some of the reasons why the power sector of the country is in a vulnerable state.

Although Talukder was not sacked, the incident deeply affected officials of all the stakeholders in the power sector. Everyone is viewing the move to remove the minister as a clear demonstration of power of the corrupt axis of officials and the alternative powerhouse over the government's decision making

"What excuse can the government have to justify removal of a minister within two months of appointment? If he has taken a position against corruption, why should the government oppose that? If he has done anything grossly wrong, everyone is supposed to be aware of that," said a competent source of the energy ministry.

Soon after assuming the post of state minister for power, Anwarul Kabir Talukder came into conflicts with the PMO and its so-called highpowered committee headed by the principal secretary to the prime minister, which routinely interferes with the activities of the power ministry. Talukder's position is that the

prime minister has entrusted him with the responsibility of the ministry and therefore the PMO or the

secretarial committee should not interfere with his decision making process or leadership.

On the other hand the PMO and the secretarial committee argue that since the previous Awami League government's regime, the secretarial committee has been spearheading power sector decisions. "But this is not true. During the Awami League regime, the secretarial committee helped the power and energy ministry coordinate with other ministries and authorities in implementing decisions." noted a source

Secretary to the Prime Minister Harris Chowdhury and expressed his unhappiness over the interference saying that it is hindering progress and creating confusion. But the meeting did not produce any positive result.

The key players of the current high powered committee are Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and Secretary to the Prime Minister Khandker Shahidul Islam. None of them enjoy the reputation of being

In the last four years, the alternative powerhouse had most of the efficient officers in various power establishments removed and replaced them with inappropriate or inefficient or corrupt officials. To do so, there were some instances of serious violation of rules and regulations. For instance, the present secretary of power was holding the rank of a deputy secretary prior to his unusual double promotion in a single day in

### President's health

the Bangabhaban on advice of the physicians of the Singapore hospital, said Malik

"The board expresses satisfaction at the progress of rehabilitation programme. The overall health condition is steady as before, and fit to continue light office work as recommended by Mount Elizabeth Hospital," a Bangabhaban release quoted the board physicians as saying after the checkup.

lajuddin was admitted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Dhaka on May 23 and was flown to Singapore the next day for treatment of cardiac complications.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar since then discharged the duties of president until July 6. On return from Singapore on

June 20, lajuddin did not take contexts as the reason. charge of the presidency. He was admitted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, triggering vice suspended following a conflict rumours that there might be a between them. change in presidency.

He got back to the Bangabhaban on June 24 but did not take charge, adding to the rumour.

### Road march

FROM PAGE 1 combine's city coordinator Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya formally declared the end of the march at about 6:00pm.

Waving banners, festoons and placards, opposition men started marching at 4:00pm from near the Buriganga Bridge amid unprecedented security.

The opposition combine also held brief rallies near the Buriganga Bridge and at Siddique Bazar.

Senior opposition leaders including Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Motia Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta, Rashed Khan Menon Hasanul Haque Inu, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Dilip Barua, Mainuddin Khan Badal, Mostafa Mohsin Montu addressed

The opposition leaders vowed to resist any election in the country before the proposed electoral reforms are implemented. They also reiterated the demand for immediate resignation of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and two other 'politically appointed' election commissioners to ensure free, fair and neutral elections.

After the rally, senior leaders including Maya, Dilip, Maj Gen (rtd) Subed Ali Bhuiyan, Hazi Mohammad Selim and Dr HBM Iqbal led the march. Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain joined the march at Gulistan.

The marchers blasted the fourparty alliance government for price hike of essentials and disruption of power and water supply. A government led by AL chief Sheikh Hasina will bring an end to the misrule and corruption of the coalition government after the election, they said. They also chanted slogans that

turned into pre-election campaign in favour of several prospective opposition candidates including Hazi Mohammad Selim, Dr HBM Igbal, Sayeed Khokon, Nabiul Hamid Bipu, among others, in the next Hundreds of people gathered on

the roadside shops and different business houses to welcome the marchers. Many more, mostly women, watched the march from roadside houses Police, Rapid Action Battalion

(Rab), Bangladesh Rifles and intelligence agencies were deployed along the march route. Rab men stood guard on the roofs of high-rise buildings while a Rab helicopter hovered above to closely observe the march.

The law enforcers put a number of barricades on different city roads and no public or private vehicles were allowed to ply from Shahbagh to Motijheel, Paltan, and Gulistan areas from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. The law enforcers also blocked the roads of the old part of the city where only a limited number of rickshaws Lack of vehicles amid heavy

rainfall added to the sufferings of the homebound people from busy areas like Motiiheel, Dilkusha, Gulistan, Paltan and different parts of the old

Tight security measurers were taken in and around the Bangladesh

### Satellite channels

FROM PAGE 1 Mir Hossain Akhtar, president of Bangladesh Satellite Cable Network Owners Association (SCNOA), told The Daily Star that they stopped airing the foreign channels at 5:00pm yester-

"We've received the government notice this morning," he said, adding that they are however continuing transmission of the Bangladesh channels. Asked why they got the other

foreign channels besides the 13 off air, he said the government notice also ordered to stop downlink of 'other channels Coab President Anwar Parvez said, "The government ordered not to

ones for which the distributors do not Asked why they have been running the channels without government permission. SCNOA president said as

downlink the 13 channels and the

far as he was concerned there was permission for all pay channels. He alleged that the government did not consult the cable operators before issuing the order.

"Why should the government discuss with them? They were running the business evading a huge remittance. They did not receive permission from the government and were siphoning off a large amount of money from the country this way," said Anwar Parvez.

On stoppage of such popular channels, he said, "People are still able to watch the major games on DD Sports, ARI, Real Madrid, Sports 1, 2, 3.4.5.6.7 and 8. Saving that apart from the 26

channels for which the government has issued permission, some distributors were downlinking other pay channels including the 13, Coab Secretary General Nizam Uddin Masud submitted an application to the information minister on May 24, asking for measures to stop marketing of the channels.

Acting on the application, Senior Assistant Secretary of the information ministry Mostafa Kamal issued the order on July 24 to stop downlink of the 13 channels and others for which there is no government permission. The government had earlier

channels citing difference in cultural Besides, the two groups of cable network operators had kept the ser-

stopped transmission of some foreign

Sources said such situation arises usually during renewal of dealership of the cable operators and the distribu-

## UN appeals for truce

The six members of the al-Kharakeh family were crushed to death under the rubble of their two-storey house, which was destroyed in the Israeli raid close to the town of Nabativeh n central Lebanon.

The father, Adnan al-Kharakeh, an official with the Lebanese civil defence, was not killed in the raid. It was not clear if he had escaped or was not at home at the time of the Six civilians were also killed in an

Israeli air raid on four houses in the border village of Ain Arab in southeast Lebanon, police said, UN peacekeepers were heading to the village which has been cut off from the rest of the country by Israeli bombardment of the main road. Israel, which last week lost nine soldiers in fighting around Bint Jbeil

conflict, said Friday it had killed 26 Hezbollah fighters. The bodies of eight civilians, including a couple and their three children in a car hit by a missile. were found on the roads of southern Lebanon following Israeli bombard-

ments on the region, officials said

and a neighbouring village in its

biggest single-day death toll of the

"We retrieved from a destroyed car the bodies of a man, his wife and their three children who were killed three days ago on the Maarub-Dardghia road, near the southern port city of Tyre," the civil defence chief in southern Lebanon, Salam

Daher, told AFP. The bodies of three other civilians killed by shrapnel, some partly decomposed, were found on roads

near Tyre, he said US President George W. Bush said Rice will arrive in the region Saturday "to work with Israel and Lebanon to come up with an acceptable UN Security Council resolution that we can table next week.'

Bush and his staunchest ally, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, held talks in Washington on a threestep plan to end the crisis, isolate Hezbollah and its backers Iran and Svria, and set the stage for a longterm solution for the Middle East.

Blair said world powers would meet at UN headquarters in New York Monday to discuss the possible deployment of a multinational stabilisation force in Lebanon.

Israel's offensive, saying a more comprehensive solution was necessary.
"This is a moment of intense conflict in the Middle East. Yet our aim is to turn it into a moment of

opportunity and a chance for a

But they again refused to call for

an immediate ceasefire to stop

broader change in the region," said The two leaders also warned Israel's archfoes Syria and Iran that they must become "proper and responsible members of the international community" or face "the risk of

increasing confrontation. Facing a potential humanitarian crisis in Lebanon, UN humanitarian coordinator Jan Egeland called for a 72-hour truce to allow casualties to be evacuated and food and medi-

cine to be sent into the war zone. He cited Lebanese health ministry figures saying that more than 600 people had been killed in Lebanon since Israel launched its offensive against Hezbollah targets on July 12 in response to the capture of two soldiers in a deadly cross-border raid. An AFP count has put the death toll in Lebanon at more than 430, the

vast majority of them civilians. Israel has ordered the mobilisation of thousands of army reservists to bolster its assault and stepped up its air war aimed at stopping rocket fire and freeing the captured sol-

diers. But on Saturday, Hezbollah militants gave a new display of their firepower, launching a new heavywarhead missile across the border. Israeli police said an unknown missile capable of carrying 100 kilos

among five that landed in the town of Afula, causing no casualties Hezbollah said it fired for the first time a salvo of what it called Khaibar missiles.

(220 pounds) of explosives was

The strike came after Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah vowed that his guerrillas would fire rockets at Israel beyond the northern port city of Haifa, after so far using only

shorter-range Katyusha rockets against Israel.

And the Israeli military said it would deploy Patriot anti-missile batteries near Tel Aviv -- Israel's largest city -- if Hezbollah used longrange missiles.

Meanwhile a senior EU delegation in Beirut threw its support behind Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora's plan to resolve the conflict, which calls for an exchange of prisoners, and a pacification of their common border.

With 800,000 people displaced by the fighting, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) criticised what it called the "unacceptable" humanitarian situation in Lebanon. "Much more has to be done by

Israeli forces... to protect and spare civilians in the conduct of military Kraehenbuehl, the ICRC's director of operations, at the same time criticising Hezbollah's firing of rockets at civilian areas. He also said the ICRC had not

received any positive response from Hezbollah in response to its request to visit the two abducted Israeli soldiers International medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF

Doctors Without Borders) said Israel's promised humanitarian aid corridors in south Lebanon were an "In effect there is no real humanitarian access in the south, the international community is deluding itself with talk of humanitarian

Christopher Stokes told reporters in Despite Asian and European Union calls for a halt to fighting Bush again warned against what he called "fake peace".

Setting a different pace, French

President Jacques Chirac said

corridors," its operations chief

Friday he wanted a UN resolution calling for an immediate truce adopted "as quickly as possible". Bush's position reinforced the stance adopted -- despite Arab protests -- at an international confer-

ence in Rome Wednesday.

Israel seized on that refusal to call for a quick truce as a green light to press on with its offensive. But that claim was dismissed Friday as "outrageous" by Washington, in its strongest open

criticism of Israel yet during the

Israeli attacks on south Lebanon Fridav killed 10 more civilians. including a Jordanian, while fierce clashes flared between Israeli troops and Hezbollah militants around the flashpoint town of Bint

Army chief Dan Halutz on Thursday claimed that "enormous' damage had been inflicted on Hezbollah with hundreds of its

fiahters hit. A total of 51 Israelis have died in cross-border fighting, most of them soldiers. The government has ordered the mobilisation of three divisions of reservists -- as many as 30.000 more troops, although it said t has decided to limit its ground

offensives. In the Gaza Strip, where Israel is engaged in another assault to man, two people were killed on Friday, bringing the death toll from

the month-old offensive to at least 145 Palestinians and one Israeli. The army said two Israeli children were lightly wounded on Friday when a rocket fired from the Gaza

Strip landed on the southern Israeli

### town of Ashkelon. Ligers

FROM PAGE 1

force the pace at 188-6.

same venue today.

Mohammad Ashraful (25) and Habibul Bashar (40). Nafees's innings eventually came to an end when he was bowled by Ed Rainsford trying to

brisk 39 to push the score towards respectability with his innings highlighted by two huge sixes over deep fine leg and long-off. The defeat served a blow for Bangladesh's dream of winning

their first away series. The second

one-dayer will take place at the

Mohammad Rafique added a

# Iran's nuke row

adopted next week. earlier drafts, which would have made the threat of sanctions immediate. The draft now essentially requires the council to hold further discussions

duced on Iran in the draft resolution which we are finalising," Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said. Churkin stressed that work on the

before it considers sanctions.

resolution was not finished, raising the possibility the introduction of the draft could be postponed. The resolution, drafted by Britain,

France and Germany with US backing, is a followup to a July 12 agreement by the foreign ministers of those four countries, plus Russia and China to refer Tehran to the Security Council for not responding to incentives to suspend enrichment. The ministers asked that council

members adopt a resolution making Iran's suspension of enrichment activities mandatory. Tehran said last week it would reply Aug. 22 to the Western incentive package, but the council decided to go ahead with a resolution and not wait for Iran's response.

nuclear ambitions and said it was considering the incentives. Western nations have dismissed the idea of such talks without a halt to Iran's uranium enrichment Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, speaking to

step" toward a diplomatic solution. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Friday Moscow wants a swift, positive response from Iran on the package, Russian news agencies

"We are counting on the Iranian leadership to finish studying (the incentives) and give a positive answer as soon as possible," Interfax, ITAR-Tass and RIA-Novosti quoted Lavrov as saving on a plane en route to Dubai from Malaysia where he attended an Asian security forum.

The US and some of its allies accuse Iran of seeking to produce highly enriched uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons. Tehran maintains its nuclear program is purely peaceful and aimed at generating

#### Iran on Friday called again for late in the day and will likely be international negotiations on its Because of Russian and Chinese demands, the text is weaker than

"There (are) no sanctions introreporters in Malaysia, said Tehran considers the package as a "positive