

Israeli jets

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he still hoped the Security Council could adopt a resolution on Friday. Other diplomats said no vote was likely before Saturday.

The war, which began after Hezbollah seized two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid on July 12, has killed at least 1,023 people in Lebanon. At least 123 Israelis have been killed.

The Israeli army confirmed on Friday that two soldiers had been killed in Lebanon the previous day. An Israeli general had said about 50 Hezbollah guerrillas were killed on Thursday.

The conflict appeared to be inflicting political damage on Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who was elected in March.

A survey in Israel's Haaretz daily found only 48 percent of Israelis were satisfied with his performance against more than 75 percent early in the war.

The US-French draft UN resolution calls for a "cessation of hostilities" but negotiations have repeatedly stalled on how and when Israeli troops would withdraw from southern Lebanon.

The Beirut government has rejected an international force not under UN control, while Israel has insisted on a strong multinational force before it would withdraw.

The latest compromise calls for a phased Israeli withdrawal as the Lebanese army deploys in the

south. At the same time the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, known as Unifil, would be reinforced by up to 15,000 French and other troops.

As part of the deal, Hezbollah would pull out from south of the Litani river, 20km from the Israeli border.

The resolution is expected to ban all arms supplies to Lebanon except those destined for the army and UN forces.

A second resolution is expected within a month setting out terms for a permanent ceasefire, including the release of the two Israeli soldiers held by Hezbollah.

In Marjayoun, a Christian town occupied by Israeli forces on Thursday, Unifil troops were evacuating about 350 Lebanese soldiers and policemen from the local barracks under an agreement with the Israelis, officials said.

Many people in Marjayoun and nearby Qlaihah wanted to join the evacuees heading for the southern city of Sidon.

"The situation is so bad. There is a curfew so we can't see the Israelis, but we hear gunshots near the house," one resident, Rana Daher, told Reuters by telephone.

"We have no running water, no electricity, and we are running out of food. We have one bag of bread left," she said.

Key suspect Salehi

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avoid arrest. Charges will be brought against him", said the IO in the prayer.

According to other arrested suspects, the revolver used in the murder, and Taher's wallet and a mobile SIM card were taken by Salehi after the killing, police said.

Meanwhile, the Masters course examinations of geology and mining department is scheduled to begin today. Salehi is also an examinee but his examinations will start on August 17, department sources said.

A large number of police have been deployed at key points of the campus since last night.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and left leaning student leaders in the meantime expressed concerns about today's rally by the fundamentalist student group ICS and Salehi's possible reappearance on the campus on the occasion.

They expressed their dissatisfaction with the university administration for allowing Salehi to enter the campus. Earlier, Shibir activists gave death threats to the university unit BCL president and general secretary after they had protested Salehi's plan to enter the campus.

Prof S Taher Ahmed, a senior pro-BNP teacher of the department of geology and mining, went missing on the night of February 1 and his body was found on February 3 morning inside a sewer behind his campus residence.

Ctg port

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stevedore companies and foreign company, Saif Power Tech, temporarily at the port.

A 10-member committee comprising five from CPA and five from BMSA, led by CPA Member (Operation) Captain Qamrul Hassain, was formed to provide recommendations on the issue.

Container handling at Chittagong Port remained suspended for 20 hours since 10:00pm on Thursday protesting the decision of the port authority to stop operations of three local stevedore companies.

First ODI

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(BST) with state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Channel I beaming the live coverage from the Kenyan capital.

Before coming to their second challenge in the African safari, Bangladesh had a disappointing 3-2 loss in the highly expected series against Zimbabwe. And the shocking result has made it a real challenge for the Tigers to at least console the heart-breaking defeat against the young Zimbabweans.

The Bangladesh think-tank made one change from the side that beat Zimbabwe in the last game of the series, by eight wickets, as pace spearhead Mashrafe Bin Mortuza returned in place of Musfiqur Rahim.

TEAM
Khaled Mashud (captain), Shahrar Nafees, Rajin Saleh, Aftab Ahmed, Mohammad Ashraf, Sakib Al Hasan, Forhad Reza, Mohammad Rafique, Abdur Razzak, Mashrafe Bin Mortuza and Syed Rasel.

Shamsur Rahman

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complexities involved with old age. He is in the ICU of the hospital under life support.

Family members said a meeting of the nine-member medical board, which formed on Wednesday to monitor the health of the poet, would be held today, where the board will decide whether the poet will be flown abroad for better treatment.

Zakiganj border

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during the BDR-BSF clash have not returned fearing more firefights.

The BSF has dug more trenches in the north and south of the disputed 256-acre farmland, gathered more troops and installed mortars following the firefight, said BDR sources.

"Bangladesh has also increased its strength in the area to retaliate if BSF makes any further aggressive moves," said an official of BDR.

Meanwhile, BDR put its troops on high alert along the 700-kilometre border with India in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Habiganj.

Deputy Inspector General of Cachhar and Mizoram sector of BSF yesterday in a letter to the BDR sector commander, Sylhet, accused BDR of starting the Wednesday night's firefight.

Sector Commander of BDR, Sylhet, Colonel Abul Hossain said, "It is an absolute lie. We are sending a protest letter today [yesterday]."

Abul Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday evening that they are preparing themselves for the sector-commander-level meeting since the Indians did not ask for cancellation of the meeting scheduled for August 13 (tomorrow).

The meeting has the 256-acre farmland on the agenda. The farmland triggered the dispute between BDR and BSF one and a half months ago.

Lt Colonel Abu Tasnim, 38 Battalion Commander of BDR, told The Daily Star the situation still remains tensed in Zakiganj border area even though there were no shots fired.

However, the inhabitants of the 15 villages, who had deserted their homes after the Wednesday night's and Thursday's firefight, did not return to their homesteads.

Muhibur Rahman, a septuagenarian hailing from the bordering village Minapara, said "I could not sleep on Wednesday night as shootings and exploding mortar shells kept me awake." Muhibur had taken shelter at nearby Anandapur village after leaving his home on Thursday.

The tin-shed houses of Abdul Quddus at Barothakuri and Mostafa Mian were razed as mortar shells hit the houses. Alai Mian's house at village Uttar Kul and Namor Ali's at Kazipara were also badly damaged.

7 militants

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Zone and Fakhirhat areas and arrested five militants on Thursday night.

They arrested Hamid and Humayun early yesterday morning when the two came to the police station to see the arrestees.

The police seized around 200 leaflets and books on Jihad from the militants. The leaflets call for establishing Islamic rule in the country through armed revolution.

Sources said the militants were recruiting members in different areas of the city, inviting them to join Hizbut Tawhid. During a primary interrogation the arrestees confessed to have been working for the organisation in Chittagong for two years.

Quoting the arrestees, the police said the organisation's country chief is Bayezid Khan Panni, a cousin of former deputy speaker of parliament Humayun Khan Panni.

The organisation started its activities in Bangladesh in 1991, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Bandar PS Abul Khair Matubbar. The militants, however, denied having any connection with the outlawed Jama'at-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), he said.

The arrestees were sent to the court yesterday.

"Our drive will continue along with other law enforcement agencies to catch other activists of the organisation," the OC told journalists.

PM urges

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general to activate the Security Council to take forthright action for immediate and unconditional ceasefire and urgent deployment of an adequate international stabilisation force on the Israel-Lebanon border.

She also called for UN sponsored conference on ways and means to enhance the authority of the Lebanese government and promotion of all initiatives for a peacefully negotiated settlement of the Palestine-Israel conflict including the quartet roadmap and Arab peace initiative leading to a permanent two-state solution.

Khaleda said ancillary measures of prime importance are release of detainees, safe passage, delivery of relief goods and concerted steps for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the devastated lands.

She said the root causes of the crisis in the Middle East were well known and that a durable solution could be achieved by pushing all parties to reach a just settlement.

The prime minister emphasised that political issues could not be resolved by military means and that history had proved the futility of this approach.

The letters were written in the wake of the consensus among the leaders of the Muslim countries at the special meeting of the extended executive committee summit meeting held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on August 3.

Oli won't care for party ticket

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surpassed all previous records.

A section of the ruling alliance leaders and lawmakers including some ministers have been involved in plundering public wealth and thus amassed a huge fortune.

"Good people should unite and raise their voice against these unscrupulous deeds, or else we'll have to suffer more," he said.

Slamming the ministers for corruption and inefficiency, the former minister said, "The country has not been leased to anyone and neither has anyone the licence to do whatever they please."

Asenior lawmaker, gallant freedom fighter and one of the founding figures of BNP, Oli Ahmed Bir Bikram discussed with The Daily Star a number of issues ranging from corruption to the upcoming election.

His conflict with the BNP leadership could be traced back to the nomination for Chittagong-14 in the 2001 election. In the fallout from the discord, he has been kept out of the cabinet after the last election.

On numerous occasions, he had voiced disgust at his party members' growing involvement in corruption. He also spoke out against the anti-liberation forces within the ruling alliance for sheltering the militants.

"I have been campaigning for the last one year against a section of ministers and lawmakers who have amassed a huge wealth through illegal means. Democracy doesn't mean that a handful of people will plunder the wealth of the majority," he said.

The Daily Star: Do you plan to form a new political party before the next general election?
Oli: Inshallah, I will carry on my movement against the corrupt and plunderers and try to mobilise public opinion against them. I know it's a very risky job, no one has stood against his own government in last 36 years.

It's high time that we unite and get rid of these elements once and for all. The rule of law must be established and the country should be a welfare state and I will be at the forefront of that campaign. No matter what gets in the way, I'll stick to it.

TDS: Who are these people?
Oli: Everyone knows who they are. Starting from a street vendor to a CNG driver, we all could identify them. Even members of the parliamentary standing committee have come up with

specific accusations.

Organisations like Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) should take measures against them. Unfortunately, the ACC is working as a rehabilitation centre for the elderly and retired people.

TDS: How many seats will you contest the next general election?
Oli: The people of Chittagong-14 want me to be a candidate there and free them from the shackles of unwanted elements. I've agreed to their call. Inshallah, I will contest from more than three constituencies including Chittagong-14.

TDS: How will you respond if BNP takes action against you on disciplinary ground?
Oli: It's my duty to speak against the corrupt and wrongdoers. Nobody has the right to dictate what should be my course of action. And I don't care what action they'll take against me, I will continue my fight.

TDS: Do you think Ershad's joining will bring better election results for the ruling alliance?
Oli: Well, I have no idea about it because it was never discussed at the party's policymaking level. Only time will prove whether his inclusion will bring any good or not.

TDS: Why didn't you voice your complaints at the party forum and why now, at the end of present government, have you decided to be vocal?
Oli: To speak one's mind and get a point across in the current party structure is somewhat impossible. We haven't had a council for ages now. The standing committee meeting is called only for candidate selection.

TDS: Is it possible for the BNP-led alliance to win the next election?
Oli: The present political situation does not bode well for the country. People have lost faith in the political parties. Skyrocketing prices of essentials, shortage of power and rampant corruption have made their life miserable.

People must unite in opposition to this trend, otherwise they will suffer more.

TDS: Do you agree with the recent Washington Times report suggesting that Jamaat maintains a strong militant group?
Oli: Jamaat's involvement with the banned Jama'at-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) has been widely reported in the newspapers. Some of the Jamaat leaders have even been

held for having links to the militancy.

TDS: Many JMB cadres including its top brass Abdul Rahman and Bangla Bhai have been arrested. Do you feel the captures will mark an end to the crisis?
Oli: Of course not. As I said many times before, the real culprits remain behind the curtain and they will have to be unmasked.

It is still not clear to the public how such a countrywide bombing was funded, how the JMB cadres amassed such huge firearms and explosives, and more importantly, why certain quarters were eager to hide or deny the militants' existence when the media had exposed the matter long before August 2005.

The very fact that Bangla Bhai would march processions under police escort indicates that the militants were operating with the blessing of a very powerful lobby. We only have seen the tip of the iceberg, and we must get to the core of militancy if we are to beat the menace of religious extremism.

TDS: Currently, there's a strong debate centring the Karnaphuli Bridge. The city mayor opposes the pillar bridge for he maintains that it would be harmful for the river. What's your opinion?
Oli: Our major concern is why the construction of the bridge has been delayed for the last five years. People believe the government took time to decide on with whom to share the body.

Teachers strike

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this decision considering the college admission tests and second term examinations.

If the government does not withdraw the new condition by August 25, NTFE leaders would hold a grand rally and a grand sit-in programme in the capital on August 26 and continue the sit-in until their demands are met.

In the wake of the month-long strike by the teachers of non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas, the government announced cent per cent basic salary from the government exchequer with a condition of depositing tuition fees of the institutions to the government fund.

Previously, non-government teachers received 90 percent of their salary from the government.

Teachers' strike

Buriganga channel

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and flood vast areas of the western part of the city.

"Our team of experts did not dare to say anything at the site but later we expressed our concern to the LGED in a letter," said a top official of WDB requesting not to be named.

Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu told The Daily Star the bridge is being built following a promise made by the prime minister to the people. He said it is not his company's concern to find out whether there was any environmental clearance for the project or not.

"It is the responsibility of the LGED to ensure the environmental issues," he said adding that the second channel has never been encroached by anyone. "Come and show me where they are selling plots," he said.

The LGED's Dhaka Division Executive Engineer Mohammad Mominur Rahman said the consultant should have done all the environmental assessments.

Engineer Serajul Islam of the consultant firm PDK Consortium said since no large vessels plied on the channel, there was no need to ensure navigability.

"We did not find it necessary to do any environmental assessment or seek clearance for this bridge, because the people of the area did not ask for it," he added.

Typhoon Saomai

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Canganan county.

"Lots of people were hurt here but my family are all okay," said Wu Yelian, an old woman doing a roaring trade in instant noodles and canned drinks to drivers stuck in the heat in a jam on the narrow mountain road outside.

"I haven't seen a typhoon this strong in years. Last time we had a bad one, a dam collapsed and many people died."

Power was also cut in five towns close to where Saomai made landfall, Xinhua said.

Along a highway in Canganan, trees were knocked flat, their branches and tops ripped off. Tiles and even bricks from flimsy farm houses lay strewn about on the ground. Power and fixed telephone lines were knocked down.

The typhoon crossed the coast with winds of 216 km (135 mph) per hour — more powerful than a typhoon that hit Zhejiang in August 1956, killing more than 3,000 people.

Saomai was the eighth storm to hit China this year. Tropical Storm Risk (www.tropicalstormrisk.com) had graded Saomai a maximum-category 5 "super" typhoon, but reduced that to category 4 as it made landfall, the same category as Hurricane Katrina which devastated the US Gulf coast last year.

Much of south China has been battered by typhoons and tropical storms this summer. Nearly 1,000 have been killed by rainstorms, mudslides, house collapses and floods.

Tropical storm Bilis killed at least 637 in China last month and typhoon Prapiroon killed about 80 last week.

By Friday morning, Saomai had weakened into a tropical depression and moved inland.

'Massive' projects

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good amount of money from various projects, they said.

Executive Engineer of Khulna BWDB Abdul Malek, however, termed such allegations "totally baseless".

The Tk 272 crore Khulna Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP) that was implemented between 1995 and 2004, included massive dredging work, construction of regulators, dams and embankments in the project areas, but it failed to improve the situation.

Rather, the project further worsened the drainage problem in the region and led to the death of several rivers in the area, locals said.

A cross-section of affected people, whom this correspondent talked to, vented their anger on BWDB officials who did not accept locals' suggestion to address the problems through indigenous water management practices known as Tidal River Management (TRM).

After wastage of quite a long time, BWDB included TRM system in the project but faulty implementation resulted in failure of some of the TRM attempts.

The system developed over generations is simple — to allow tidal flow into wetland basin and releasing it back to the river. Through this process, sediments carried by tidal flow deposit on the wetland basin instead of riverbed.

"As long as BWDB officials are here, the problem will not be resolved," said Shahidullah Sarder, convener of Keshabpur upazila Krishak Sangram Samity.

Local leaders of the successive ruling parties mysteriously support BWDB activities that have so far failed to bring any positive result, locals said, adding that influential owners of fish enclosures in the area are also playing significant role in the waterlogging that left hundreds of hectares of land unusable and damaged several thousand houses.

The KJDRP project covered 100,600 hectares of land spread over Batiaghata, Daulatpur, Dumuria and Phultala upazilas in Khulna and Abhoynagar, Keshabpur, Jessore Sadar and Manirampur upazilas in Jessore.

Local people resisted the project for years as its design and approach did not match with their 'expectations'.

Superintendent Engineer of BWDB (Khulna) Nurul Ala said they could not work in the proper way and complete their task in time due to resistance from the local people.

Claiming the KJDRP as successful, he said, "Most of the rivers would dry up if the project works were not carried out."

KJDRP was supposed to mitigate the waterlogging problem, but the project made the problem much more difficult and complex to solve, said a book on KJDRP published by local NGO Uttarjan, which is working to help people get rid of waterlogging.

Besides, the project has led to the death of several rivers, said locals and some members of Water Committee, a local civil society

forum campaigning for measures to solve the problem of persistent waterlogging.

Thirty-two kilometres of silted up riverbed of Hamkura river is now being used as agricultural land. The river was alive and flowing but implementation of the project divided its flow into Hari river basin and Upper Sholmari basin, leading to the river's death, observed the Water Committee members.

The connection between Upper Bhadra and Buri Bhadra is also nearly dead. Besides, rivers in northwest part of KJDRP area, namely Teligati, Hari, Upper Bhadra and Harihar are now under threat.

The situation could have further worsened if local communities did not implement TRM in Beel Bhaina.

Navigability of Ghengrial and lower Salta has been substantially reduced after the connection between the two rivers was severed under the project.

To ensure community participation in the project, Water Management Association (WMA) and Water Management Federation (WMF) were formed at different levels. But there are allegations that people's representations were never reflected in WMA and WMF as local influential people used to be elected in the bodies through the use of power.

The elected WMA and WMF members used to support BWDM activities, defying protest of local people.

Principal AMB Shafiqul Islam, president of Water Committee, said the project was similar to that of Costal Embankment Project under which 37 polders and 282 sluice gates were constructed in Khulna, Satkhira and Jessore districts in the 60s. "It is old wine in a new bottle," he said.

Following the construction, higher level of sedimentation in river channels gradually raised the riverbeds while adjacent beels (wetlands) subsided due to non-deposition of sediment, resulting in waterlogging in a vast expanse of land.

Regional dialogue

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Eminent academics and professionals, development and cultural activists, public representatives and political leaders and civil society representatives of the district are expected to speak at the dialogue beginning at 9:00am.

Members of the Nagorik Committee 2006, who are preparing a "Vision Paper" for the country, will also be present to receive public feedback.

DFO sued

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R&HD officials had earlier said when forest department started cutting trees on Bogra-Joypurhat highway, they were requested to stop this pending a joint inquiry but they ignored it. More than 2,000 trees on different roads have already been cut and many more marked for auction sale, they mentioned.

Police in New Delhi also stepped up security, including at the Indira Gandhi International Airport.

"The Delhi police backed by central intelligence and paramilitary agencies are maintaining the highest state of alert as part of our Independence Day security drill," a senior official from the federal home ministry told AFP.

"All vital installations like bus and railway stations, airports, metro services and government buildings are under the scanner," he said.

Police said security was also raised in the eastern city of Kolkata, where five guards of the American Centre were killed in an attack by suspected Islamic militants on the facility in January 2001.

Police, meanwhile, announced the overnight arrest of two men at New Delhi railway station allegedly carrying a quantity of explosives.

Police said the pair, one of them a Pakistani national, had links with a Lashkar-e-Taiba Islamic militant group which is engaged in guerrilla warfare with Indian troops in disputed Kashmir.

The US warning comes exactly a month after serial train blasts in Mumbai killed 183 commuters and injured nearly 900.

On October 29 last year, serial bombings in New Delhi markets ahead of a Hindu Festival killed 62 people. Lashkar has been blamed by India for both the Mumbai train blasts and the attack in the Indian capital.

Another 250

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The chartered MEA aircraft will carry 250 of them from Damascus airport. They are expected to reach Dhaka at 4:30am.

The remaining Bangladeshis will be brought home on availability of flights. A total of 278 Bangladeshis have so far been repatriated from war battered Lebanon.

According to an official estimate, 10,000 Bangladeshis nationals are believed to be in Lebanon. Unofficial estimates however claim the number will be higher than 15,000.