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BDR, BSF agree to pull out troops along Zakiganj border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday decided to withdraw within 5:00pm today the troops they had deployed along the border during the recent firefight at Zakiganj in Sylhet.

Two gunned down by BSF

STAR REPORT
The Border Security Force (BSF) of India gunned down two Bangladeshi nationals in the last two days in bordering areas of Dinajpur and Thakurgaon. In Dinajpur, BSF of Mallikpur under 116 BSF battalion shot at least three bullets at one Wahab Ali in Bangladesh territory near main pillar 319 and sub-pillar ¼ at Kamdevpur village under Biral.

Poet Shamsur Rahman's condition turns critical

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Poet Shamsur Rahman lapsed into a very critical condition yesterday afternoon. As his heart was having trouble functioning, he was put on a ventilator at around 3:00pm, said the doctors at Bangabandhu Sheikh.

BNP insiders confused over party positions

Executive body to hold meeting after 13yrs on Aug 26; some members are not aware of it

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN
Many members of the ruling BNP's National Executive Committee (NEC) have no idea about their colleagues, even the total number of NEC members, while many party leaders and workers also do not know them.

chairperson has often made changes in the committee over the last 12 years through press releases instead of holding any conference. The NEC is going to hold its meeting on August 26 after about 13 years of the last meeting and a few NEC members expressed their surprise, saying they do not know anything about it.

letter from the party about the meeting...I will not attend the meeting though due to illness." He is one of the most senior BNP leaders, but most committee members do not know him. Interestingly, he asked this correspondence when the meeting will take place. The last NEC meeting held in 1993 formed a committee of 87 officials and 84 members. A few

BORDER FIRING Dhaka protests Indian HC's statement against BDR

UNB, Dhaka
Dhaka yesterday protested the Indian High Commission's statement accusing Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) of 'opening unprovoked fire' on Border Security Force (BSF) on Zakiganj border a few days back. A foreign ministry spokesman termed the statement false, fabricated and unsubstantiated.

Israel wreaks havoc on eve of UN truce

31 Israeli soldiers, 11 Lebanese civilians killed as fighting rages

AFP, Tyre
Israel carried out waves of deadly bombing raids on Lebanon yesterday, flattening homes, bridges and setting petrol stations ablaze even after UN chief Kofi Annan said a ceasefire in the devastating month-old war would take effect today.

land in southern Lebanon. Annan said Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had agreed that a cessation of hostilities will enter into force at 0500 GMT on Monday, following a UN Security Council resolution adopted unanimously on Friday after protracted diplomatic wrangling.

lives, to spare the pain and suffering that the civilians on both sides are living through," Annan said. The Lebanese government on Saturday approved the Resolution 1701 -- albeit with reservations -- while Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said his Shia Muslim movement would abide by an agreed ceasefire but also vowed to continue fighting as long as Israeli troops remained on Lebanese soil.

New survey shows fast poverty reduction

Experts doubt accuracy

REJAUL KARIM BYRON
A draft report of Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) yesterday claimed poverty reduction in the country by 1.9 percentage point a year in the last five years, which has been questioned by economists. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) prepared the survey report and placed it at a high level meeting between the planning ministry officials and representatives of donor agencies in Dhaka. The report shows decline of poverty from 49.8 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2005.

Zaid Bakht expressed reservation about the figure of yearly poverty reduction as stated in the report. "We witnessed poverty reduction of one percentage point a year from 1991 to 2000 against an average GDP growth of five percent," he said adding, "But the latest survey shows that the poverty reduction rate almost doubled whereas the GDP growth did not increase significantly in the last five years." Besides, population growth did not reduce in the last five years, in such a situation the survey report raises questions, he said. High officials of the planning ministry yesterday described the government's success in poverty reduction to representatives of the



A street urchin takes away the fish that died in Gulshan Lake in the capital yesterday. A huge number of fish died in the lake yesterday apparently from water pollution.

EC berates some poll observers

Accuses them of not following policy, guideline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The secretary of the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday slammed some of the election observers for not following properly the policy and guidelines on polls observation. "There are some organisations who engage school and college students to observe elections. Some of them don't even submit observation reports to the Election Commission. Sometimes they issue statements that could unbalance the situation during the election time," Abdur Rashid Sarkar,

the EC secretary, told reporters yesterday. He, however, did not name any of the election observers' bodies. "It's my observations in general," he added. In accordance with the policy and guidelines formulated by the EC for election observers no one can be appointed an observer unless they are eligible for contesting an election and their age will be minimum 25 years. About the alliance of 35 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) launching a platform

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