

# Lanka reinforces troops as aid workers flee

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka sent additional troops to the northern front lines in its fight with Tamil Tiger guerrillas, as some aid workers pulled back yesterday to escape ever closer artillery fire.

Almost three weeks of the first ground fighting with Tiger rebels since a 2002 ceasefire has left the northern government-held Jaffna enclave largely cut off and areas near the port of Trincomalee under intermittent artillery fire.

The army said on Friday the night was unusually quiet but there was "light" artillery fire and fleeting attacks, blamed on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, behind army lines.

Aid workers say columns of troops and vehicles have been moving up to Trincomalee, just north of where fighting initially began around a rebel-held water supply. It was not clear if they would be used in the area or taken by ship toward Jaffna, where the army says more than 100 soldiers died this week.

The European Union and United States on Thursday urged the government and the LTTE to stop the fighting.

The EU and the US will discuss the worsening conflict with other key donor Japan and mediator Norway in Brussels before mid-September, officials said.

"We'll need to assess the deteriorating state of the ceasefire," a western diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Few diplomats believe either side can really win another round in a two-decade civil war. Despite

# The bard will remain

**FROM PAGE 1**  
University Central Mosque for a namaz-e-janaza. Later, he was laid to rest at Banani graveyard beside his mother Amena Khatun's grave, in accordance with the poet's last wish.

The noted poet of the country breathed his last at 6:30pm at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital on Thursday leaving the whole nation with a sense of void. The poet was admitted to BSMMU hospital on August 6 after he had become seriously ill.

Before his body arrived at the Shaheed Minar at 10:15am yesterday, hundreds of people from all walks of life and ages including children and women had been waiting in a long queue to pay their last tributes to their beloved poet.

During the wake different political, socio-cultural and professional bodies, newspaper staff, many poets, writers, university teachers, cultural and social activists, political leaders, admirers, relatives and a large number of other people in a disciplined manner one after another paid their respects to the poet by placing wreaths on the coffin.

They recalled Shamsur Rahman's great contributions through his literary works to the struggle for freedom, democracy and secularism. They also recalled with gratitude the poet's contributions to enrichment of Bangla poetry.

The master of the ceremony (MC), Golam Kuddus, also general secretary of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, in his deep emotion choked voice with great respect to the poet, elaborated the poet's contributions to the country, literature and poetry, bringing about a sombre silence among the crowd on the Shaheed Minar premises.

The poet's body had been kept there until 12:50pm before it was taken to DU Central Mosque for a janaza. Several hundred of his fans were still standing at the Shaheed Minar in silence in a long queue, who could not pay their tributes to their adored poet due to time constraint.

As the MC announced that the wake had ended, a funeral procession with the coffin, joined by a several thousand people, was brought out from the Sheheed Minar to the mosque.

After the janaza following the Jumma prayers, many more people paid their respects to the poet. Thousands of people including Eminent Jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Education Minister Dr M Osman Farruk, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar, Justice KM Sobhan, Awami League leaders Tofail Ahmed and Asaduzzaman Noor, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu, Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) Secretary General Shahidul Islam attended the janaza and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

The poet's first janaza was held at SOS Shishu Palli Jam-e-Mosque on Thursday at 10:30pm.

At the wake at Shaheed Minar, BNP Secretary General also LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan placed a wreath on the poet's coffin on behalf of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Motia Chowdhury, and Sajeda Chowdhury placed wreaths on the coffin on behalf of Leader of the Opposition

heavy fighting, the front line has barely moved and in Jaffna the two sides are stuck in an almost World War One style battle across no-man's land.

With artillery fire gradually getting closer, aid workers say helping the war and disaster-hit in northern and eastern Sri Lanka has become increasingly hard.

Some international agencies -- as well as unnamed Nordic ceasefire monitors -- are moving their staff south out of Trincomalee after artillery fire came down within a couple of miles of the beachfront hotels where many were staying.

After 17 mainly Tamil staff from Paris-based aid group Action Contre La Faïm were executed after fighting south of Trincomalee, few want to take chances. It was the worst attack on aid staff since a 2003 bomb attack on the United Nations in Baghdad.

Tens of thousands of war and victims of the 2004 tsunami were still in rough camps and settlements even before ground fighting began.

In the last three weeks, observers say several hundred civilians have likely died and more than 100,000 people displaced. "We are able to reach people in the camps," said Mahabub Alam, head of the UN World Food Programme in north and east Sri Lanka. "But we cannot get into uncleared areas. Our assessment teams are simply unable to go there," he said referring to rebel-held territory.

to rebel-held territory.

also AL president Sheikh Hasina. They also placed wreaths on behalf of the 14-party opposition coalition.

President of Gono Forum and Jatiya Oikya Mancha Dr Kamal Hossain also placed wreaths on the poet's coffin while senior leaders of different political parties and eminent personalities including BNP leader KM Obaidur Rahman, Justice KM Sobhan, Hasanul Haque Inu, Asaduzzaman Noor, Syed Shamsul Huq, Zillur Rahman Siddique, Sardar Fazlul Karim, Prof Anisuzzaman, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Yusuf Haider, Hashem Khan, Prof Abdullah Abu Syed, Nasiruddin Yusuf, Ramendu Majumder, Nirmal Sen, and Sanjib Dronng among many others also paid their last tributes to Shamsur Rahman.

Jatiya Party, Dhaka city 14-party opposition coalition, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Gonotantri Party, Supreme Court Bar Association, Peshajibi Samannoy Parishad, Dhaka University, Dhaka University Teachers' Association, Muktiyoddha Sangsad, Tarikat Federation, Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad, Bangabandhu Parishad, Sammilito Ainjibi Parishad, Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh Writers Club, Lekhak Shibir, Bangla Academy, Jatiya Dhaka Parishad, front organisations of the ruling BNP and opposition AL, Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad, Dhaka Bar Association, Ain O Shalish Kendra, Adibashi Forum, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Jatiya Shikhhak Karmochari Front, Chittagong Bandar Raksha Sangram Parishad and hundreds of other organisations paid their last respects to the country's premier poet.

Later, the poet was laid to rest at Banani graveyard. Hundreds of people from all walks of life thronged Banani graveyard also to catch a last glimpse of their beloved poet.

Sheikh Hasina visited the residence of Shamsur Rahman to console his family members on her way back from Tunjipara. Hasina, accompanied by her sister Sheikh Rehana, AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Sheikh Helal MP, spent time with the poet's family at their residence for an hour.

Recalling the poet's contributions to contemporary Bangla poetry, the opposition leader expressed her deep sense of loss at the death of Shamsur Rahman and expressed sympathy to his family.

The poet's qulqhwan will be held at his Shamily residence after the Asr prayers today while special prayers for salvation of the departed soul of Shamsur Rahman will also be said at every mosque and at other places of worship of different religions in the capital today.

On August 22, a citizens' mourning rally will be held at the Central Shaheed Minar. People from all walks of life have been requested to attend the rally.

## Deer rescued

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to the Safari Park authority on Wednesday.

They said 'Maya Horeen' is one of the five species of deer once seen in large numbers in the forests of Bangladesh. The other four species are 'Chitra Horeen' (spotted deer), 'Sambar Horeen' (Sambar deer), 'Para Horeen' (Hog deer) and 'Baroshinga Horeen' (Swamp deer).

Hog deer and Swamp deer have already become extinct in our country while Barking deer and Sambar deer are on the verge of extinction, Safari Park Project Director Dr Tapan Kumar Dey, also the divisional forest officer of WMNCD, said, referring to the latest IUCN data.

A Hog deer in the Safari Park, which the authorities received three years ago from a remote place of Khagrachhari, is now the only deer of the species in the country, he said.

"The number of Sambar deer is very few and are seen sometimes in the deep forests of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar," he said, adding that there are 21 Sambar deer in the Safari Park now.

The Barking deer is disappearing fast from Bangladesh and rarely seen in the forests of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Mymensingh and Tangail, Dr Tapan said.

## US official

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She will meet officials and review US-funded refugee programs in the three countries, they said.

Thailand is saddled with 140,000 refugees from military-ruled Myanmar as well as several thousand ethnic Hmong believed from neighbouring Laos.

The refugees from Myanmar are living in nine border camps in Thailand, many of whom have been there for up to 20 years. Some of them fled fighting between the Karen National Union, the oldest and largest rebel force, against Myanmar's military regime.

Thailand had also been running refugee camps for several thousand ethnic Hmong.

Since last year, Bangkok has been investigating the cases of nearly 7,000 Hmong, many of whom allegedly crossed the border with Laos from April 2004.

Some Hmong were allied with the United States during the Vietnam War and formed a Central Intelligence Agency-backed secret army when the war spilled into Laos.

When the United States withdrew in 1975, many Hmong feared persecution by the communist government of Laos and fled to Thailand, where they lived in refugee camps.

## 4 Hizbul Tawhid

**FROM PAGE 1**  
recovered nine leaflets and eight books on Jihad authored by chief of the organisation Bayezid Khan Panni.

The arrested militants were produced in the court, which sent them to jail.

Police said Abu Hassan Hawlader, one of the four arrestees, was arrested after the August 17 serial blasts last year and later released on bail.

## Voters can enlist

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which can be called if necessary.

District Election Officer: Dhaka-1, 8359958, Dhaka-2, 8357146, Dhaka-3 9112640 and Dhaka-4, 8124162.

Thana Election Officer: Lalbagh 9348823, Kotwali 9359255, Sutrapur 9350566, Demra 9354846, Motijheel 8313010, Sabujbagh 8356823, Dhanmondi 9115649, Ramna 9114279, Gulshan 8112056, Cantonment 8120519, Uttara 8115148, Mohammadpur 9117916, Tejgaon 8120104, Mirpur 8126231 and Pallabi 8126202.

Besides, 10 Zonal Executive Officers of Dhaka City Corporation have been assigned to coordinate with the updating of voter list and they can be contacted, if necessary.

The Monitoring Cell at the EC can also be contacted for extending necessary cooperation regarding the voter list. Monitoring Cell phones numbers are: 8129325 and 9129033.

## Dhaka offers

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our contingent will be determined after receiving the details of the UN terms of reference for fresh deployment of troops," he said.

Bangladesh is now the largest troops contributing country in UN peacekeeping missions with approximately 11,000 soldiers operating as Blue Helmet peacekeepers in 11 countries around the world.

AP said UN Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown told the meeting of troops contributing countries that at least 3,500 new troops are needed in south Lebanon within 10 days to expand the 2,000-strong UN force trying to help maintain an uneasy truce between Israeli and Hezbollah militants.

# PMO intervenes

**FROM PAGE 1**

two objections that the programme should have been placed before the cabinet for discussion earlier and that the home ministry should at first ensure budgetary allocation for the job.

"But the point is, the prime minister has already approved it in 2004. We have sought allocation and conducted other formalities," Babar added.

"This scheme is going to immensely benefit the government whichever party heads it in the next term. In the first year, the revenue earning from selling MRP will be Tk 2000 crore. Each passport will cost us Tk 300, while we will sell the same at Tk 5000," he claimed.

However, sources said that the home ministry has inflated the revenue earning prospect from MRP. While the present demand for passport is around 12 lakh a year, the home ministry put the demand for MRP at 30 lakh in the first year of introduction. Passport experts say, while many people buy multiple passports presently, MRP will eliminate all scopes for multiple passports. Therefore, the first year sales might be 5 to 10 percent lower than 12 lakh, they say.

Bangladesh has an international obligation to introduce MRP by 2007. But there is no compulsion for the NID scheme. In addition, there is no approval of the prime minister to set up a national registration department, which will issue the NID. But Babar argues that the home ministry is working on the matter. Sources however wonder why so much haste is made for NID scheme for which there is no compulsion and a national registration department is not set up first.

Besides, till the second week of July, the ministry did not frame any draft law for the NID which is mandatory for such a scheme. Instead it drafted a law a couple of days before the July 17 meeting and sent it to the purchase committee though it was irrelevant. No cabinet member, except for Babar, knows anything about this draft law till date.

Babar says that the programme is one year behind schedule due to various bureaucratic tangles. He said that his ministry did the basic work of identifying manpower requirements but that process became stuck at the level of the finance ministry.

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# The poet

**FROM PAGE 1**  
People irrespective of cast, creed and religion joined the wake wearing black.

A large number of people also joined the poet's janaza and offered prayers seeking eternal peace for him.

Earlier, the Central Shaheed Minar was also teeming with people paying homage to the premier poet of this country. Thousands of people queued up and waited a long time to catch a last glimpse of his face. The gathering soon surged onto adjacent roads.

Volunteers were busy managing the crowd and with maintaining discipline.

Many of the mourners carried roses or wreaths which they laid beside the poet's body as a symbol of love and respect.

Shamsur Rahman long ago imagined such a scenario. In his poem Mask (Mukhosh) he wrote:

Show me me with petals/heap bouquets around me! won't complain. Unable to move! I won't ask you to stop! nor, if butterflies or swarms of flies! settle on my nose, can I brush them away! Indifferent to the scent of jasmine and benjamin! to rose-water and loud lament! I lie supine with sightless eyes! while the man who will wash me scratches his ample behind.

Such a great poet he was with an extra-ordinary power of imagination! In another poem Sofed Panjabi (White Shirt) Shamsur Rahman rendered a poetic description of an address to the people by a popular political leader Moulana Bhashani. Through Bhashani's address, Rahman depicted in detail the devastation caused by a destructive cyclone, which had lashed the southern part of the country. The poem is also a unique example of modern political write ups.

Grief stricken people yesterday also lined up to write down their heart felt feelings for the poet in the comment book. Last respects were also formally paid on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office, the leader of the opposition, political parties and various socio-cultural organisations.

Recitals of his poems through loud speakers were filling up the air. The entire atmosphere was very sombre. Some television channels telecasted the funeral wake live.

From the core of his heart, Shamsur Rahman loved this soil, the beauty and greenery of Bangladesh, which sprinkled his poems.

Going through his writings one would find hundreds of lines where Shamsur Rahman expressed his love for the country and its people. The people also paid great tributes to him in return.

None of the poets, who had passed away recently before him, got so much respect and love from

But sources said that when a new body needs to be formed, it must go through an approval process by the national implementation committee on administrative reorganisation (NICAR). The NICAR headed by the prime minister holds one or two meetings a year.

Sources said from the beginning, the home ministry did all the exercises on its own. There was no opinion exchange among different ministries and with external experts. Besides, the ministry did not hire any experienced consultant for such a huge job.

"The whole thing is being driven by the political lobby which has asked for a hefty commission from the German company for getting the project approved," said a competent source adding, "this is why there is a hurry."

Though 34 international companies showed interest in the bid, only four were pre-qualified. Then only two bids were submitted. The cabinet purchase committee on July 17 wanted to know how the lowest bid was evaluated.

**OBSERVATIONS OF SAIFUR RAHMAN**  
On July 17, following the purchase committee meeting, finance minister M Saifur Rahman made some remarks on this programme, "the national ID card is a massive issue. It has serious implications all over."

"I told them (home ministry officials at the meeting) it can not be done in this manner. They said that they have brought along the relevant draft law. I said that we must at first read this law and then take opinions on it. This is why we have closed this chapter," Saifur said.

The finance minister was not happy about the bid selection process. "We don't approve awarding such a job to just one company," Saifur told the press.

A few members of the committee at the meeting heavily objected to the scheme while the others were completely silent. A member opined that if this scheme is approved, a vested interest lobby will just drain out the money without delivering the products, a meeting source told The Daily Star.

## Heroin recovered, 4 held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel yesterday recovered one kg heroin and arrested four people, including two women, in the city's Khilkhet area.

The arrestees are Mohammad Selim, 24, Shanto, 26, Adia Islam Lima, 21, and Nargis Sultana alias Salma Begum, 45.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-3 raided Malek Matbor's house at 3/Ka Khilkhet at 3:00am and arrested the four with heroin.

The arrestees later admitted that they have been carrying out drug business in the area for a long time.

## Threat to blow up Taj Mahal

AP, Lucknow

Police in northern India have heightened security around the Taj Mahal after receiving a letter threatening to blow up the monument, officials said yesterday.

Sandbag bunkers have been set up outside the towering entrance gates leading to the 17th century monument and soldiers belonging to an anti-terrorist squad have been posted on 24-hour duty, said Ashok Kumar, a senior government official in Uttar Pradesh state where the Taj Mahal is located.

Police were investigating a handwritten letter purportedly sent by an al-Qaeda supporter, saying the terrorist group planned to carry out blasts at the Taj Mahal.

Police were sceptical about the letter, but had begun investigations, Kumar said Friday.

"Police are verifying the source of the letter," he said. "The letter could be false but we cannot afford to be complacent. We are not taking any chances and have enhanced security at the Taj."

"The letter, signed by someone calling himself Mohammed Mirza and claiming to be associated with the al-Qaeda, was received at the office of the superintendent of police in Agra on Thursday," Kumar said.

"The letter said the al-Qaeda had plans to carry out blasts at the Taj Mahal and around busy markets of Agra," he said.

## Prayer for rain

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predicted that 50 per cent of the targeted Aman paddy cannot be achieved this year if the drought continues for a few more days.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) of Rangpur Abdur Rahim said if it does not rain sufficiently in the next three or four days, a vast tract of land in Rangpur might have to be left uncultivated this season. "In the district coordination meeting on Sunday, I asked all concerned to advise the farmers on alternative irrigation," he said.

Sources at the directorate office of DAE said about 15 lakh hectares of land in eight northern districts have been targeted for Aman cultivation this season but only 65 per cent of it could be cultivated so far.

Meteorologists of the local Met office meanwhile observed the weather situation as being abnormal. The Met office recorded rainfall at 281.3mm in Rangpur in July when a normal rainfall should measure at least 453mm.

The rainfall in the district was 671.2mm this time last year.

The Met office recorded rainfall until August 17 at about 80mm while it was about 690mm last year.

The local meteorologists said weak monsoon air in the Bay is the main reason for the situation. It is uncertain whether or not the monsoon air will gain strength this month, said an official of the local Met office.

## Garment workers

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maternity leaves and they are being terminated or being harassed with false cases, they said.

The speakers demanded Tk 3,000 minimum basic salary and taking experience, seniority and current market price into consideration while fixing their wage.

## Airport alarm

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and apologise on national TV."

The FBI did not return messages on Thursday night seeking comment on the allegations.

A screener noticed a bottle in Rima Qayyum's carry-on bag as she was going through security before her 9:15 am flight on Thursday to Charlotte, North Carolina, airport authority president Jim Booton said.

The terminal was evacuated at 11:25 am after two bottles of liquid in the bag initially tested positive for explosives residue twice, and a canine team also got a positive hit.

Chemical tests of the bottles' contents later turned up no explosives, said Capt. Jack Chambers, head of the State Police Special Operations unit.

The incident comes a week after British police disrupted an alleged plot to bomb US-bound airliners leaving Britain. The suspected bombers planned to use liquid explosives, authorities said.

The case prompted the US government to ban passengers from carrying liquids and gels on commercial aircraft.

Flights out of the West Virginia airport resumed on Thursday afternoon, the TSA said in a statement.

# Lebanese troops

**FROM PAGE 16**

Palestinian guerrillas in the 1970s and by Hezbollah since Israeli troops withdrew from the area in 2000.

"We are all very happy," Sheikhani said. "It's our country, and this is the first time we've really been in south Lebanon."

Five days into a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah, there was still no firm date for a deployment of an enhanced international force that is supposed to expand to 15,000 troops and join an equal number of Lebanese soldiers.

The United Nations got pledges Thursday of 3,500 troops for the force, with Bangladesh making the largest offer of up to 2,000 troops. But France offered just 400, and Germany uneasy given its Nazi past of any possible military confrontation with Israeli soldiers said it wouldn't send any.

France was expected to lead the UN force, and its announcement of such a small number focused attention on its demands for a more explicit mandate, including when to use firepower, and could affect contributions by other countries.

Even though the Israeli withdrawal and handover to UN forces has gone well thus far, some potential contributors are believed to be concerned about avoiding confrontation with Hezbollah or being caught in the middle of a future conflict.

The UN ceasefire resolution called for the force to keep the peace and disarm Hezbollah fighters south of the Litani River. However, the Lebanese government adopted a mandate Wednesday that requires confiscation of Hezbollah arms only if carried in public. It said nothing about the network of Hezbollah rocket bunkers across the 18-mile stretch between the river and the Israeli border.

The deep political divisions in Lebanon resurfaced with the head of the largest parliamentary bloc blasting both Israel and Syria in a fiery nationalist speech to hundreds of supporters.

Saad Hariri, the leader of an independent, secular bloc that has opposed Syrian domination of Lebanon and is seen as an opponent of Hezbollah, accused Israel of "living off the blood" of Arabs and said Syrian President Bashar Assad was trying to sow strife in Lebanon. Syria and Iran are the main international backers of Hezbollah, a Shiite Muslim guerrilla group opposed to Israel.

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman

Mark Regev, when asked about Hariri's speech, said: "Too often in the Arab world, people think that political legitimacy is attained by bashing Israel."

At least 845 Lebanese were killed in the 34-day war: 743 civilians, 34 soldiers and 68 Hezbollah. Israel says it killed about 530 guerrillas. On the Israeli side, 157 were killed, 118 soldiers and 39 civilians, many from the 3,970 Hezbollah rocket strikes. The figures were compiled by The Associated Press, mostly from government officials on both sides.

In Beirut, the international airport reopened to commercial traffic for the first time Thursday since July 13, when it was attacked by Israeli warplanes and gunboats. A Middle East Airlines passenger jet touched down from Amman, Jordan, ending a 36-day Israeli blockade, and a Royal Jordanian flight followed soon after.

The Israeli military said it was coordinating the arrivals, and that the air blockade had not been lifted. But Middle East Airlines Chairman Mohammed Hout said the blockade was partially lifted to allow flights between Amman and Beirut. Airport officials said full commercial traffic could resume next week.

The area of Lebanon's border with Israel is in ruins. In the towns of Aduaise and Taibeh, south and west of Kfar Kila respectively, it was difficult to find a building that was not blackened, pockmarked by artillery or flattened altogether.

Wreckage was strewn through the streets, but new Hezbollah flags flapped in the wind over piles of rubble.

Sheikhani said Lebanese troops would assist in the reconstruction effort, but he gave no details.

## Bangladeshis

**FROM PAGE 16**  
into Greece, the source said.

The police apprehended the truck as it was driving on a highway between the towns of Alexandroupoli and Didymoticho, in the northeastern prefecture of Evros that borders Turkey.

Two more men suspected of complicity in the illegal transit are currently sought.

The three trucks will be taken before a prosecutor in Alexandroupoli, while the migrants will be deported, the source said.

Greece is a popular entry point for thousands of would-be migrants seeking a better future in Europe.

# Human chain

**FROM PAGE 16**  
to the programme with his father, was holding a placard saying - "Shanka, katokhon tikke gharkhana" [concerned about how long my house will survive]. "I've come here because my relatives living in the waterlogged area have nothing to eat," the kindergarten (KG) student of Scholastica said.