

## Blair may request for troops for Afghanistan

M ANWARUL HAQ

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair is likely to request Bangladesh to contribute some of its highly trained troops to the International Security Assistance Force for maintaining peace in war-ravaged Afghanistan, according to sources.

Blair arrives here tomorrow at 7 pm by a special flight on a two-day "working visit". He will be lodged at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Britain heads the International Security Assistance Force, set up under a Security Council Resolution passed late last month.

The International Security Assistance Force created under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter is different from the traditional Peacekeeping Force formed under Chapter Six of the Charter. Chapter Seven calls for Enforcement Action involving high-risk exposure and action. Chapter six involves routine

peacekeeping work.

If Bangladesh accedes to the British request, its soldiers will be charged with creating a "peace shield" in and around Kabul, gradually extending it to the whole of Afghanistan.

The security force will ultimately oversee that there is no human rights violation in Afghanistan. It will protect Kabul airport and subsequently other airports, and help

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## Barapukuria set to become another 'white elephant'

SHARIER KHAN

As financial viability of the Barapukuria coal mine scheme has become uncertain its costly coal-fired power generation project component is becoming a huge financial burden on the country.

Works on the US\$220 million Barapukuria coal-fired power project did not start even six months after the agreement was signed due to lack of a 30-year coal supply guarantee from the owners of the mine, Petrobangla.

At the same time, the economics of the \$192 million mine project and its implementation time are set to suffer due to repeated flooding of the mine from unpredictable water reservoir. The authorities are seriously considering installation of a new shaft 1.5 km south of the original one at extra costs.

This would delay implementation of the scheme by several years, sources said.

But as the Power Development Board (PDB) signed an agreement with a consortium of three Chinese companies - CMC, SEC and SEEC - to set up the 250 MW plant in July 12 last year, it is now bound to pay the builders an installment soon.

This has become inevitable as Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji is scheduled to visit Bangladesh on January 11.

As Bangladesh has a friendly tie with China which is involved in a number

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Tony Blair

## Users welcome ban on polybags

STAR REPORT

A ban on production and use of polythene shopping bags in the city came into force on the New Year's Day yesterday with the environment-hostile bags making way for those made of bio-degradable materials like jute, cotton and paper.

The public response to the new move appeared positive though, as shopkeepers, salesmen and buyers used jute bags and thonga (cheap paper-made packets).

Members of law-enforcement agencies also went to different markets and shopping centres and asked the retailers not to sell their goods in polybags use and production of which (less than 20-micron thick) was banned by the government last month. The bar will be extended outside the capital within two months as per a cabinet decision.

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Jute bags of various sizes, colours and designs, have flooded city markets as environment-friendly substitutes for polybag, banned by government from the New Year's Day.

## Pak cricketers due today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Pakistan cricket team arrives in Bangladesh today to play two Tests and three one-day internationals.

Waqar Younis will lead a strong 16-member team in the first series against the Test babes. Waqar's side boasts some of the biggest names in the game including his predecessor Wasim Akram and champion batsman Inzamam-ul Haq, who will act as deputy of the star fast bowler.

The tour will certainly give Pakistan a chance to return to international action since their last

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## India, Pakistan renew nuclear pact despite tension

Both countries seem to pull back from brink of war

REUTERS, AFP, New Delhi

India and Pakistan yesterday renewed a 10-year-old agreement under which both countries are committed not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities, the foreign ministry said.

India and Pakistan each year submit a list of nuclear facilities to be covered under the agreement which

came into force in 1991, one of only a few confidence-building measures between the nuclear-capable nations.

But the list has assumed greater importance as both nations are engaged in the biggest military build-up along their border in nearly 15 years after last month's attack on the Indian parliament which New Delhi blamed on two Pakistan-

based groups fighting Indian rule in disputed Kashmir.

India and Pakistan appeared yesterday to be inching back from the brink of conflict as a Pakistani crackdown on Islamic extremist groups fuelled hopes of bilateral talks at an upcoming South Asia leadership summit in Nepal.

The shift from confrontation to possible negotiation was signalled

on Monday by Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh who, for the first time, did not rule out some kind of bilateral dialogue on the sidelines of the January 4-6 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Kathmandu.

"I will see how the programme develops," Singh said, after welcoming

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## Killing of ex-ward commissioner Police yet to find motive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are yet to ascertain the motive behind the murder of BNP leader and former ward commissioner Khaled Imam.

He was shot dead near the Moghbazar rail crossing in the city at about 9:30 pm on Monday. He was 47.

After a brief conversation with some local party men on the footpath in front of Baghdad Motors, Khaled had sidestepped for cigarettes from a shop. He gave a 500 taka note and was waiting for changes. His daughter Sajeda Imam Pamela also came in a car and felt after few minutes' talks with him.

All of a sudden, a gang of about 15 appeared there in a car, a microbus and two motorcycles.

Four or five gangsters burst forth from the car and fired several shots, hitting his head and chest. Khaled collapsed on a bench in front of the shop.

His elder brother Giasuddin Imam and younger brothers Alamgir Imam and Sarfuddin Imam were present there. Sarfuddin fired six shots at the fleeing gang from his licensed gun but the miscreants escaped unhurt.

Hearing gunshots, Khaled's daughter came back to the spot and found her father lying in a pool of blood in front of the shop.

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## Ten dists under Khulna Div Fresh lists of terrorists, illegal arms holders

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Fresh lists of 1772 terrorists and holders of illegal firearms under 10 districts of the Khulna division have recently been prepared by order of the home ministry, according to sources in the KMP and Khulna Range Office of the DIG of police.

One of the lists prepared by the Khulna Range Office of the DIG of police contains names of 1511 persons from districts under Khulna Range. KMP (Khulna Metropolitan Police) prepared the other list of 261 persons under five police stations of the Khulna Metropolitan City.

Updated for the second time over the last one year, these lists contain names of political and non-political terrorists and holders of illegal firearms and ammunition, and copies have already been sent to all police stations and 150 police outposts for immediate action.

The first list was prepared by the AL government last year followed by a second fresh list by order of the caretaker government of Justice Latifur Rahman. Accordingly, 97 listed terrorists were arrested from ten districts of Khulna division in combing operations from July 17 to July 29 last year.

The recently updated lists have already been approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs and sent to police superintendents and the police commissioner for taking necessary legal action. Police have reportedly received the go-ahead for launching combing operations on December 15 last, sources said.

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