

# Musharraf vows to 'eliminate' al-Qaeda

Militants kill 8 Pakistani soldiers

**AFP, Washington**  
Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf vowed Friday that he would "eliminate" al-Qaeda and said that the terror network's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was on the run.  
Musharraf spoke during an interview with ABC News, one day after an audio tape -- attributed to Zawahiri -- urged Pakistan's military to support al-Qaeda and sweep Musharraf from power.  
Musharraf's interview followed execution of eight Pakistani soldiers taken hostage in fighting by al-Qaeda-linked militants near the Afghan border, officials said yesterday, raising the temperature in an offensive on Islamic radicals.  
"Now as far as he's taunting me well, I would like to say that I'm going to eliminate all of them,"

Pakistan's leader said, referring to Zawahiri and al-Qaeda loyalists.  
"I mean, Zawahiri is on the run. For heaven's sake, it's just one tape. Let's not get excited," Musharraf said.  
"It's very clear we'll eliminate them, and the tribal elders are cooperating," he added.  
The call was made in a tape broadcast by the Arab Al-Jazeera television network late Thursday and attributed to al-Qaeda deputy Ayman Al-Zawahiri in a recording described by US intelligence as "probably authentic."  
The tape called on Pakistan's military to "not obey orders" and overthrow Musharraf's administration, which it calls a "traitor government."  
Pakistan's military and government have poured scorn on the tape.

Furious Islamists took to Pakistan's streets Friday to protest the 11-day military operation against tribal fighters and al-Qaeda militants along Pakistan's northern border with Afghanistan, as rebel tribesmen at the centre of the battle refused to hand over hostages until troops withdraw.  
**EXECUTION OF 8 SOLDIERS**  
The executed soldiers, their hands tied behind their backs and apparently shot at point-blank range, were found in a ditch on Friday near Wana, the capital of the South Waziristan area in Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal territories.  
They were likely taken hostage and killed shortly after their conveyance.



## Independence day rally

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by its Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, right, and the main opposition Awami League led by its President Sheikh Hasina, left, bring out processions in Dhaka on Friday on the occasion of Independence Day.



PHOTO: STAR

# Women to soon take security jobs abroad

**RAFIQ HASAN**  
Bangladesh women will soon take up security guards' jobs abroad under a government initiative, a government official said yesterday.  
The government will send trained women such as members of the Village Defence Party (VDP) to Saudi Arabia and other countries as security guards of girls' colleges, dormitories, hostels and other predominantly women workplaces, a high official of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry said.  
The initiative was taken after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's recent visit to Shafipur Ansar academy where she said the gov-

ernment would take a plan to send women VDP and Ansar members abroad.  
The expatriates' welfare ministry sat with the home ministry to work out the plan in the wake of the premier's meeting.  
The government has already allocated Tk 7.30 crore for setting up a modern training centre at Shafipur Ansar Academy to train women defence force members planning to take jobs abroad.  
**DEMAND HIGH**  
Demand for Bangladeshi women as babysitters, caretakers of elderly people and women guards in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries are high, the expatriates'

welfare ministry official said.  
"There are over 22 lakh trained women Ansar and VDP members in Bangladesh, many of whom could get jobs abroad with a good salary," he said.  
Women workers will have to spend not more than Tk 15,000 each for getting such a job, sources said, adding employers would bear all their travel, food and accommodation expenses.  
According to the plan, government agency Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited will start the process and private recruiting agencies will come up later.

# AL govt survived 88 BNP deadlines

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina said yesterday BNP as an opposition had announced at least 88 deadlines for dislodging her government during its 1996-2001 term.  
"We formed the government in June 1996 and since then they (BNP) issued repeated deadlines for ousting the Awami League government. The BNP chairperson warned to oust our government within three months of taking over. Failing to meet the deadline, she (Khaleda Zia) issued several more deadlines during our five-year term," the leader of the opposition in parliament said while address-

# Robbers gun down 2 cops in Laxmipur

**UNB, Laxmipur**  
A band of robbers shot dead two policemen at Sadar upazila in Laxmipur yesterday.  
Being informed that a gang was looting a North Joypur village house, a six-member police team led by Kalimullah, assistant sub-inspector of Dattapara Investigation Centre, went there at about 3:00am, official sources said.  
The gang opened fire on the law enforcers and Kalimullah, 35, and Constable Pradip Kumar Barua, 45, were seriously wounded in the firing, they added.  
They were taken to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital where doctors declared them dead.  
"Dacoits shot at police as they knocked the house door," an official said.

# AL heading for 'political burial'

**Bhuiyan tells rally**  
**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has said the main opposition Awami League (AL) is heading for a 'political burial' after its April 30 deadline to dislodge the BNP-led ruling coalition as the latter will continue in power till the expiry of its term.  
The AL has chosen the 'path of suicide and dug its own grave' by declaring the deadline to oust the government and it will have no scope to blame others for its political blunder, he added.  
Mannan Bhuiyan, also Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives, was addressing a rally on the occasion of Independence Day at Paltan Maidan in the capital yesterday.  
Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was due to address the rally as chief guest but she could not due to sickness. An aide to the PM said last night she is slightly indisposed.  
The BNP secretary general said the AL and some other quarters have hatched a conspiracy to topple the alliance government by the deadline but the government has taken all steps to foil their evil designs with the support of people.  
"Most Awami League activists

# 'Taiwanese office taking care of trade affairs only'

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
The Taiwan representative office in Dhaka -- the apple of recent discord between China and Bangladesh -- is functioning normally.  
"This is functioning completely as a business office. It is not doing any sort of diplomatic or political activities," Board of Investment

# Khosru spends busy day in his constituency

**Says resignation gives him more time for his people**  
**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**  
On a hectic day in his constituency Friday, the day after he resigned as the commerce minister, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said he would now have more time for the people of his area.  
Talking to journalists on Friday afternoon in his Chittagong house, Khosru said though he had resigned as a minister, he would continue playing his role as a lawmaker for the



Participants prepare to fly their colourful kites at the launch of a daylong festival on the Dhaka University campus yesterday. Amra Dhakabashi, a platform of Dhaka residents, staged the Kite Festival.

# Sundarbans blaze rages on

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**  
The flames are spreading fast, affecting 50 more spots despite strenuous efforts by foresters and people living in neighbouring localities to put out the fire. Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) Md Rafiqul Islam, who is in charge of the eastern wing of the SFD, however said the blaze has been extinguished, a claim eyewitnesses contradicted saying the situation is alarming. They added the inferno is likely to engulf several thousand trees with wind

blowing over the forest at a speed of over 20 to 30 kilometres an hour.  
Rafiq said the fire originated from torches (smoking devices) used for dislodging bees from the hives by unauthorised honey collectors. Hundreds of used torches and other objects have been recovered from the place of occurrence. Sources however said the fire originated from ovens used by unauthorised woodcutters for cooking.  
Eyewitnesses Sofia, Yunus and Emdadul of Nishankhali village said fire has destroyed part of the forest covering an area of over three kilometres. Over 7,000 sundari, bair, passur and garan trees have been burnt to ashes, they said.  
According to unconfirmed sources, a vested quarter set the trees on fire with the help of Moulas or honey collectors.

# Mob gouges out eyes of Noakhali bandits

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali**  
A mob here in the early hours of yesterday gouged out the eyes of three forest bandits of coastal Noakhali, including the infamous Naybba Chora, who were arrested in a police raid in Chittagong's Bakulia area earlier on Friday.  
Police said the arrested were being transported from Chittagong's Sudharam Police Station to Char Jabbar in a prison van when a 500-strong mob surrounded the van at Herangi Road near Char Jabbar some 30 minutes after midnight.  
Eyewitnesses said 12 masked men dragged the blindfolded prisoners out of the vehicle and gouged out the eyes of Naybba Chora and

# 18 killed in Iraq violence

**AP, Baghdad**  
Bombings and shootings across Iraq have left 18 people dead, including a Marine and an ABC cameraman killed in fierce fighting between American forces and guerrillas armed with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades.  
In the center of the capital Baghdad, a bomb exploded on a street as a convoy of sport utility vehicles passed, wounding five Iraqis, US Army Lt. Col. Peter Jones said. It was not clear who was in the cars. US troops sealed off the area after the blast.  
In the city of Fallujah, about 35 miles west of Baghdad, seven Marines were wounded, besides the one killed, in clashes Friday, a US spokesman in Baghdad said. Footage from Associated Press Television News showed American troops carrying a comrade in a stretcher shortly after an explosion during combat.  
The Marines and guerrillas fought for hours in the alleys of the city, which has resisted American efforts to pacify it since the ouster of Saddam Hussein a year ago.  
The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force issued a statement saying it was "conducting offensive operations... to foster a secure and stable environment for the people." It

**Prayer Timings**  
**March 28**

	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-45	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

# 2 kidnapped, 3 bullet-hit in Rangamati

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati**  
Unidentified armed people shot and wounded three indigenous men and abducted two others in separate incidents in the district on Friday night, intelligence sources here said.  
The incidents are believed to be in the chain of the continued political violence between Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) that supports the CHT peace accord and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), which opposes it.  
Sources said more than 30 gunmen stormed Doluchhapi village in Naniarchar upazila at about 8:00pm and looked for UPDF members and supporters. At one stage, they shot three persons -- Niranjana Chakma, Prohash Chandra Chakma and Subhash Chakma.