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# Shun violence, get back to mainstream

Manmohan asks Kashmiri militants; Musharraf reacts to comment on boundary

AGENCIES, Srinagar

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday reaffirmed his pledge to build a "new" Kashmir while appealing to militants to renounce violence and return to the political mainstream.

"I have come with a message that time has now come for a new chapter in Jammu and Kashmir -- a chapter of harmony and development.

"For this, it is very important that there is peace in the state," Singh said at a public rally in Jammu, Kashmir's winter capital.

Hours after Manmohan asserted that India's boundary cannot be redrawn, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said that the Line of Control (LoC) is part of the Kashmir problem and could never be a solution.

At a meeting in Islamabad on

Wednesday night with PoK leaders, where Singh's visit to Srinagar is understood to have come up for review, Musharraf said "all sides" have to demonstrate bilateral and mutual flexibility in order to take the peace process forward.

The Indian prime minister will visit a refugee camp for Hindus who fled fighting between Islamic militants and Indian security forces before heading back to New Delhi

yesterday evening.

"Those who want to meet their political ends through terrorism, I want to tell them they will not succeed through this route," he added.

"Time has come for the misled youth to come back to the mainstream of politics by eschewing violence... Our doors are open for everyone. We invite you without any preconditions."

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## 3-year rolling investment programme reintroduced

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday decided to introduce a 3-year rolling investment programme to spur economic activity for achieving the goals stipulated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

The new plan will replace the traditional 5-year plan and run in coherence with the PRSP, a development recipe guided by the donors that is expected to be finalised in December this year.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Planning Commission in the NEC (National Economic Council) conference

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## Sharon apologises after Israeli tank fire kills 3 Egyptian cops

REUTERS, Jerusalem

An Israeli tank killed three Egyptian policemen on the Gaza-Egypt border yesterday, prompting an Israeli apology for what the army said was a tragic error when it mistook them for Palestinian militants.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon telephoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to express regret over the incident, which could derail the Egyptian foreign minister's first visit to the Jewish state next week to

discuss a planned Israeli pullout from Gaza.

Sharon promised a full investigation and to share findings with the Egyptians. Israeli military officials said soldiers had mistaken the Egyptian policemen for Palestinian militants and thought they were planting explosives against Israeli forces.

"From the bottom of our hearts, we are sorry," Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told reporters.

The Israeli army took the rare step of putting an Arabic-speaking spokesman on the Arabic satellite news channel Al Jazeera to issue an apology.

The incident, the deadliest in years involving Israeli and Egyptian forces, could raise tensions between the two former enemies at a time when the Jewish state wants Egypt to help secure Gaza after a planned Israeli withdrawal there next year.

Before dawn Thursday, a tank

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, 3rd left, reads out his party's anti-government agitation programme at a press conference at the AL headquarters in the capital yesterday.

## Postal operator held for faxing threat to US embassy

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police on Wednesday arrested a postal operator of General Post Office (GPO) for faxing a threat to the US embassy on November 9.

The Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka, yesterday placed the accused, Mahbub Ali, on a five-day remand.

An unsigned message received at the US embassy in Baridhara at 10:35am on November 9 read, "It's an institution. But the real 9/11 is today in this part of the GLOBE. Better get alert in this symbolic countdown date."

An official of the embassy filed a general diary with Motijheel Police Station the same day and the CID in preliminary investigation found out

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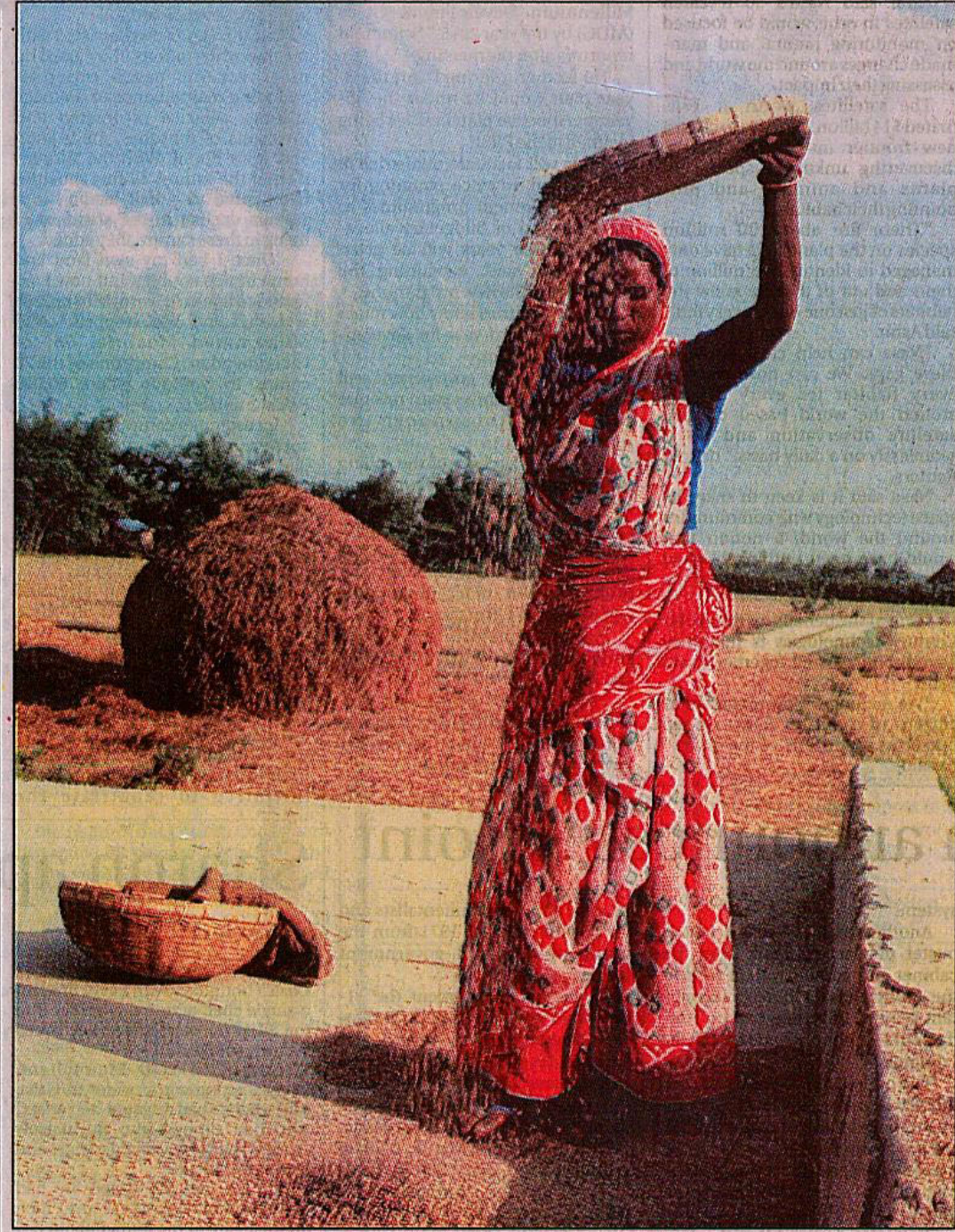


PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

The harvest of rice has started in the monsoons-afflicted northern region, but rain has dampened prospects of a bumper yield. The picture was taken in a village of Rangpur.

## 7 lakh street children risk stepping into crime world

PORIMOL PALMA

Some seven lakh children live on urban streets and many of them are addicts, who run the risk of ending up as criminals, according to a study.

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) has recently revealed the information based on a study on homeless children conducted in July-August.

Most of these children hail from rural areas, the study says. Acute poverty, separation of parents, torture by stepparents and often elopement, especially in cases of the girls, prompt them to leave their village homes, it adds.

Unaware of reality, they take to street career -- by picking garbage and rags, selling flowers, peanuts

and cigarettes -- and also become labourers.

The young girls, in most cases, fall victim to human trafficking and many of them are forced into begging and even prostitution.

Besides these hardships of the destitute children, there are the police and hoodlums to make the situation even worse.

"Every day I give Tk 10 to the police for selling peanuts on the footpaths," said 10-year-old Latif of the city's Agargaon area. Babul, 14, another street vendor who sells tea, biscuits and cigarettes, said he gives Tk 5 to Tk 10 every day to a 'elder brothers' group in Mohammadpur.

Most child labourers are addicted to drugs, 'chakki' in their language, so as to work hard and

carry heavy luggage, said an official of Ashakti Punorbashan Nibash (Apn), a drug rehabilitation centre that also treats addicted street children free of cost.

They buy sleeping pills, phenisidyl, heroin and hashish from local pharmacies and smugglers, who force them to carry those for them. Many of the children's employers also provide them with 'chakki'.

Addiction takes its toll soon. The addict children get involved in pick-pocketing, mugging and other crimes for money to buy drugs.

Girls are the most vulnerable among the street children. "Almost each of them is sexually abused by miscreants, street boys and even by

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## Minister for common forum for shared ecosystems

ARUN DEVNATH, from Bangkok

A common forum can be framed for easy passage of wild animals like elephants that have no sense of administrative boundaries, State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury told a high-profile roundtable in Bangkok yesterday.

The session of ministers from Asian countries is part of the IUCN World Conservation Congress that opened amid looming fears of species extinction at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre here on Wednesday.

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## Evidence of certificate tampering sent to court

UNB, Ctg

A former assistant registrar of Chittagong University (CU) yesterday submitted to a court the documents of cancellation or correction of 2,400 certificates, including 111 LLB certificates tampered with during 1981-1992.

Ahsan Uddin Kabir Chowdhury, the then assistant registrar, put up before the court three investigation reports, including one presented before the 353rd meeting of the CU Syndicate on cancellation of the LLB certificates of 111 lawyers during his tenure.

Two other reports submitted to the court of Special Divisional Judge Mohammad Habibur Rahman were related to nullification or correction

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## Luggage found slit open at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of people got infuriated at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday finding their luggage slit open.

Sources said 27 people of three families, who flew in a Biman flight at ZIA from New York at 3:30am, raised hell finding around 80 luggage cut. However, nothing was lost from the luggage.

The angry passengers attempted to lodge a complaint with the police against the officials concerned, but were refrained after the Lost and Found Section at ZIA intervened and assured them of compensation.

An official of the Lost and Found Section said the luggage might have been cut during security checks at the New York airport.

## Cox's Bazar brokers sent 53 illegally to KSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A primary probe by police reveals local brokers in Cox's Bazar had sent 53 Bangladeshis to Saudi Arabia in the name of performing Umrah on false documents.

However, police could not arrest anyone involved in the fraud, as the victims failed to give any details about them.

Jeddah Airport Immigration Saturday sent the Bangladeshis, most of whom hail from different upazilas in Cox's Bazar near Myanmar border. They flew to Yemen on November 7 from Zia International Airport (ZIA) on forged Umrah visas and then to Jeddah after a four-day stay in Sana.

Immigration officials at ZIA

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Prayer Timing		
November 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5:05	5:40
Juma	12:30	1:15
Asr	3:45	4:00
Maghrib	5:21	5:24
Esha	7:00	7:30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

## STRANDED PAKISTANIS

## Hunger strike on cards to force govt to resume rations

Govt decision awaits survey findings

PINAKI ROY

The government is currently conducting a countrywide survey on the stranded Pakistanis, more popularly known as the Biharis, based on the finding of which it will decide whether to resume the monthly food rations abruptly stopped 10 months ago and other measures for them.

The stranded Pakistanis meanwhile plan to go for a campaign including mass hunger strike soon to press home their demand for resumption of the food rations.

For 32 years the government had borne the expenses for food rations and utility services for the stranded Pakistanis, who now number no less than 300,000, living in 66 camps in 13 districts including Dhaka, Chittagong, Syedpur and Rangpur. They have also been receiving power and water supplies for free since their being lodged in the camps after 1971.

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"We appealed to the government before Ramadan to restart the monthly rationing. If the government does not do so, we will initiate peaceful movements like hunger strike after the Eid," M Nasim Khan, president of Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee, told The Daily Star over telephone about one week ago.

A source at the food and disaster management ministry however said a committee has already been formed to decide on the issue.

"The prime minister asked our ministry to recommend effective measures for the stranded Pakistanis. But we are yet to prepare those," said Parvin Banu, joint secretary of the ministry.

Another official requesting anonymity said, "We are carrying out a survey across the country to find out their real number and other information. Then we will decide

## UN launches international microcredit year 2005

AFP, Paris

The UN launched Thursday a 2005 international drive to promote microcredit, a nearly 30-year-old initiative that provides small loans to impoverished would-be capitalists determined to improve their lives.

First undertaken as a pilot project in 1976 by Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladesh professor of rural economics, microcredit is now available to between 55 and 60 million people around the world, many of whom would otherwise be excluded from traditional bank credit needed to start up revenue-generating enterprises.

"Potentially there are 500 million people who could be eligible for a loan," says PlanNet Finance, an international agency promoting the use of microcredit.

"If you add families, two billion people could improve their living conditions."

But critics of the program contend the project currently affects only a fraction of the estimated three billion people who must live on less than two dollars a day and ultimately fails to address the real causes of poverty.

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## 31 Iraqis killed in suicide attacks

AFP, AP, Baghdad

At least four Iraqis were killed in attacks yesterday amid a wave of violence that has left dozens killed over the past few days as US-led forces continued their battle against insurgents.

A suicide car bomber blasted an American convoy north of Baghdad and US troops battled insurgents west of the capital Wednesday as a wave of violence across Iraq's Sunni Muslim heartland killed at least 27 people.

Two Iraqis were killed and four wounded when a suicide car bomb exploded outside a police station in western Baghdad, the US military said.

An Iraqi woman was among the dead in the blast at the Yarmuk police station but the military said no US soldiers or Iraqi security personnel were hurt.

Iraq's security forces are the target of almost daily attacks by insurgents across the war-torn country, with dozens killed in recent months.

Elsewhere in the capital, two mortars fell in the Baghdad airport complex, the military said, without giving further details. It was not known if there were any casualties.

At least two Iraqi workmen were killed and a passer-by severely wounded in the northern city of Kirkuk in a blast near a US military position, police said.

"At least two Iraqi workmen were killed as they were parking their cars at the time of the explosion. A passer-by was seriously wounded," said police chief General Torhan Yossef, adding that an Iraqi government building was also located near the site of the explosion.

Kirkuk, located some 255km north of Baghdad, is a major hub for Iraq's oil industry.

Some 60 people have been killed and dozens wounded as violence flared in a number of Sunni Muslim hotspots over the past few days as US-led troops continued to clear insurgents from the flashpoint cities of Fallujah and Mosul.

The US military said a bomb blast also shook the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on Thursday, possibly causing casualties.

"Some type of a bomb hit a building in the vicinity of provincial hall and mortar rounds also landed in the area," said US military commander Michael Kurilla. "There are possibly some casualties among Iraqi security forces but we don't

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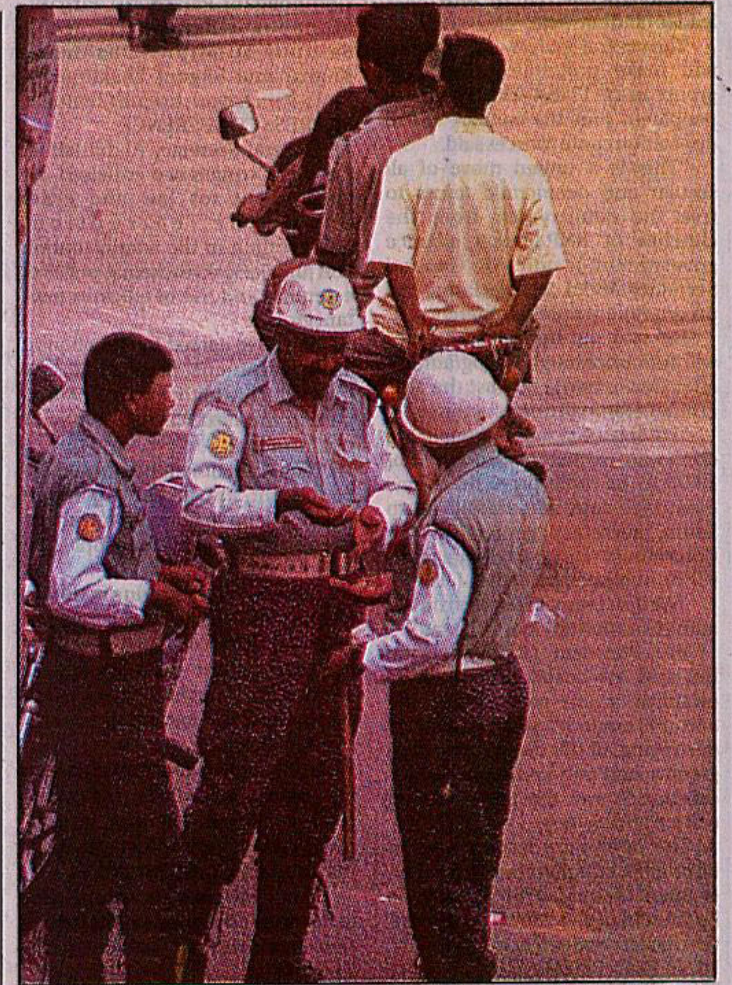


PHOTO: STAR

Three traffic policemen relish peanuts yesterday at Science Laboratory cross-roads in a rare time-out, as Eid hangover keeps city roads free of traffic rush.