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Congo ambush kills 9 Bangladeshi troops

STAR REPORT

Nine UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh were killed and 11 others wounded yesterday when two UN patrols were ambushed in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the UN mission in the country said.

The attack, one of the bloodiest on a UN peacekeeping mission in the recent years, took place in the lawless Ituri region of the former Zaire, which is a stronghold of several ethnic and political armed militias, the UN mission (MONUC) said.

Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) has identified eight of the

nine troops dead in the second largest casualty of Bangladeshi peacekeepers overseas as members of Bangladesh Army and the other of navy.

In the biggest casualty on December 25, 2003, 15 UN Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed in a plane crash in Benin that killed a total of 119 people.

Those who were killed yesterday are Captain Shahid Ashraf Khan, Warrant Officer Sohrab Hossain Talukder, Sergeant Sirajul Islam, Corporal Atoar Rahman Sarker, Leading Seaman Nurul Islam and privates Abdus Salam (No. 4009645), Abdus Salam (No. 4009837), Zahurul Islam and Belal Hossain.

Names of the injured were not available immediately.

Steps are underway to bring the bodies of the dead to Dhaka under UN supervision, the ISPR said in a media release last night.

AFP reports: 'At around 9:20 (0720 GMT) this morning, two foot patrols of a Bangladeshi MONUC contingent were caught in an ambush five kilometres west of Kafe' in the Ituri region, MONUC mission spokesman Mamadou Bah said.

He said nine peacekeepers had been killed but another four, initially reported as missing, had later been found 'in good health'.

Details of the ambush were

sketchy and it was not immediately clear who was behind the attack, but Bah said the attack took place in an area where the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI), one of the six DRC militias, is active.

The security situation in the region has deteriorated in recent weeks despite MONUC operations to dismantle militia camps run by a range of groups that have been terrorising villagers.

Since the end of last year, there had been a surge of violence in Ituri where the militias have gone on a spree of looting, rape and murder against civilians, driving more than 70,000 people from their homes.

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PHOTO: AMISUR RAHMAN

Beefed up security measures force women to leave their handbags at the entrance to the venue of an Eid reunion organised by Fatulla and Shiddhirganj BNP units outside Rajarbagh National Stadium in Fatulla where BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan spoke yesterday. (Story on page 12)

Saifur to join donors' meet in Paris Mar 1

BSS, Dhaka

The World Bank sponsored four-day high profile Bangladesh development meeting begins in Paris on February 28 to help accelerate the pace of implementation of reforms and smooth disbursement and better utilisation of funds, sources said.

Chiefs of World Bank and Asian Development Bank are scheduled to join the meeting along with high-level representatives from development partners.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman will lead a four-member Bangladesh delegation to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Donors concerned over worsening governance

Washington meet points to law and order, political violence including bombings and climate of impunity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The development partners of Bangladesh rounded off a unique meeting in Washington yesterday expressing concern at the deteriorating governance situation and deciding to keep a close watch on how the government tackles the rise

of fundamentalist militancy and improves upon the overall governance scenario.

Ending the much hyped donors' meeting that kept any official Bangladesh representation away, some of the representatives of the country's key development partners yesterday conveyed the outcome to

Alternate Executive Director of Bangladesh to the World Bank Dr Akbar Ali Khan.

"The participants, by consensus, expressed serious concern at the deterioration of governance situation in Bangladesh, especially the situation of law and order, political

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

BDR, BSF agree to a cease-fire after daylong border clash

BSS, Panchagarh

Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) agreed to a cease-fire at 8:00 last night after daylong fierce firing near Boshalupara border in Atoari upazila.

The border guards of Bangladesh and India also agreed to hold a battalion commander-level flag meeting at 9:30am today.

Villagers in Boshalupara said two

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Ahab men on the run, JMB flouts ban

2 more JMB members arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

When leaders and diehard workers of Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab) are going into hiding to avoid arrest, many Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMB) activists are still in action in Bagmara flouting the ban on their outfit.

Not only in Rajshahi, Ahab members in Khulna and Satkhira have also been fleeing their homes and madrasas following the arrest of their amir Dr Muhammad Asadullah

Al Galib, an Arabic teacher at Rajshahi University, and his three top aides last Wednesday.

Panic gripped Ahab operatives yesterday as a large contingent of paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was deployed at Salafi Madrasa and teams of Armed Police Battalion kept vigil at almost all Ahab mosques and madrasas in Rajshahi division from a suspicion that Ahab might launch retaliatory agitation after Juma prayers.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Crossfire kills 3 more in Kushtia

Death toll rises to 236

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Three alleged operatives of outlawed political outfits including a regional leader of Jashod Gono Bahini were killed in the district early yesterday in 'crossfire' between their accomplices and police at Bairagirchar village in Daulatpur upazila.

The dead are Safayat Ali, 38, son of Jastim Uddin of village Majdiar, Zinar Uddin alias Zina, 30, son of Doyaraj Uddin of Habirchar, and

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