

July 25, 2006

Steps taken to evacuate Bangladeshis from Lebanon

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin yesterday said that the government has made all arrangements including chartering aircraft if necessary to evacuate the willing Bangladeshi nationals from war-torn Lebanon.

Meanwhile, an International Organization for Migration (IOM) official in Dhaka yesterday said that a convoy of 250 Bangladeshis under IOM supervision would fly from Lebanon to Damascus sometime today.

According to an official estimate, around 10,000 Bangladeshis live in Lebanon, mostly in Beirut.

Hemayetuddin at a briefing said the government had requested IOM in Dhaka and Geneva to provide road transportation for the Bangladeshis up to Damascus as

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SEAT SHARING FOR NEXT POLLS

BNP, AL under allies' pressure

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Both the ruling BNP and main opposition Awami League (AL) seem to be under pressure from their allies over sharing seats for the upcoming parliamentary election slated for early next year.

The two parties are now out to forge a grand alliance by including Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad). They are even ready to offer a maximum of 100 seats to their partners including 50 to JP-Ershad, said sources.

Components of ruling four-party and opposition 14-party alliances have already drawn up lists of constituencies they plan to contest

from. Now as they seek to strike a bargain with the partners, conflicts over the issue seem growing within the alliances, added the sources.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafarullah said, "We are ready to discuss seat sharing with our alliance partners. But decisions on the issue will come when we will know who our partners are."

"As the biggest party in the alliance, Awami League will have to make the maximum sacrifice in sharing seats," Zafarullah, a close aide to AL President Sheikh Hasina, said adding that AL President Sheikh Hasina has

already commissioned a team to lay the groundwork for the next election.

Observers say the prospects seem bright for Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) and Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) joining the 14 party alliance. But for that to happen, BDB leaders want confirmation of the constituencies to be assigned to its leaders including all seats in Munshiganj district.

Zaker Party leader Mostafa Amir Faisal will also seek nomination from the prospective grand coalition led by Sheikh Hasina.

Both BNP and AL have been

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JUDICIARY SEPARATION SC asks for details on govt anomalies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday asked the intervener of the judiciary separation case to submit on Thursday the comparative chart of the anomalies that the government committed in implementing the 12-point directives of the court.

Attorney General (AG) AJ Mohammad Ali submitted a progress report before the court regarding the implementation of the judiciary separation.

The AG also submitted Bangladesh Judicial Service (Constitution, Recruitment in the Entry Point, Temporary Suspension, Dismissal and Removal) Rules 2006 and the Bangladesh Judicial Service (Posting, Promotion, Leave Grant, Control, Discipline and other Service Conditions) Rules 2006 that the government published on June 12 through a gazette notification as part of the judiciary separation.

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EC sounds tough on reluctant field staff

Secretary meets finance secy who says 'many things' to verify before fund release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With many assistant officials still remaining absent from the task for updating the voter list, the secretary of the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday warned of actions against those who are 'intentionally' trying to get relief from the task.

While the assistant officials are unwilling to work for updating the voter list mainly due to uncertainty about the remuneration, the EC Secretariat did not get allocation of funds for the purpose from the finance ministry as of yesterday.

EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar, who discussed the matter

of funds allocation with the finance secretary yesterday, said the ministry will allocate funds in a day or two.

Finance Secretary Siddiqui Rahman Chowdhury, however, told reporters that it will need a week to settle the issue of allocation of funds required by the EC Secretariat as there are 'many things' to verify.

Abdur Rashid said the finance ministry is satisfied with the clarification that the EC Secretariat sent on Sunday about its previous expenditure of Tk 43 crore for preparing the 'controversial' fresh voter list.

He said the assistant officials

will be provided with remuneration upon allocation of fund by the finance ministry.

The EC secretary, who had earlier denied media reports about idling of many assistant officials, yesterday said, "We will be compelled to take action against those who will refrain from work."

Although the secretary said he did not receive any such report, information gathered from the field contradicts his claim.

About crisis of forms, he said it will be solved soon.

The task of voter list update, which began on July 21 with most of the assistant officials staying at

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Rice in Lebanon as fierce fighting rages through

Two Israeli soldiers killed, helicopter 'downed', UN appeals for \$150m

AFP, AP, Beirut

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in Beirut yesterday at the start of a high-stakes mission to try to end the devastating conflict in Lebanon, even as Israeli troops were locked in deadly combat with Hezbollah guerrillas.

Confrontations again took place inside Marun al-Ras, a strategic village at an altitude of 900 metres (3,000 feet) that provides an excellent observation point for the area, security sources said.

Hezbollah guerrillas came from behind a convoy of Israeli forces in the northern sector of the hilltop village, striking a tank, which caught fire, they said.

Two soldiers were reported killed in pitched battles with Shiite Muslim militiamen on the 13th day of cross-border warfare as Israel troops in tanks, bulldozers and armoured personnel carriers pushed even deeper into Lebanon.

A combat helicopter also

crashed in northern Israel near the border with Lebanon, causing victims, the army said. Hezbollah claimed it had shot it down.

The Israeli military said an army helicopter crashed in an accident on the Israeli side of the border, causing casualties. But Hezbollah claimed it had downed the aircraft.

In the fighting on the road to Bint Jbeil, four Israeli tanks were hit and "totally burnt while their crews were killed or wounded," Hezbollah said.

"The Mujahedeen (fighters) are confronting the enemy army, which is backed by airborne commandos and is trying to advance north of the village of Marun Al-Ras toward Bint Jbeil," the Shiite militant group said.

"They are engaged in fierce confrontations," it added.

Rice, whose government has been steadfast in its support for Israel's fearsome war on Hezbollah, made a surprise visit to

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PHOTO: AFP

The devastation after an Israeli attack in the southern suburbs of Beirut. The Israeli air force is under orders to blast 10 buildings for every rocket Hezbollah fires at Haifa, Israeli army radio said yesterday.

Dhaka to attend ARF meet first time on July 28

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will make her maiden appearance in the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) as its 26th member during ARF's ministerial meeting beginning on July 28 in Kuala Lumpur.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan leaves Dhaka for Kuala Lumpur tomorrow to attend the 13th ARF ministerial meeting. He will

lead the Bangladesh delegation.

The 12th ARF meeting in Vietnam last year agreed to grant Bangladesh membership of this important forum of the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean).

Briefing reporters yesterday, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin said the 13th ministerial meeting

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14-party long march starts today amid attack fear

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine's road march programme starts today in the capital amid mass arrest and apprehensions of subversive attacks on the programme.

The ministry of home affairs also apprehend that attacks on the opposition's road march programme may occur that aims to deteriorate the law and order situa-

tion and lead the country to anarchy.

Meanwhile, police have arrested around 2,000 people, mostly opposition activists, across the country yesterday.

The opposition has already accused the government of conspiring to foil the programme by carrying out 'grenade attacks'.

At a preparatory meeting on Sunday, AL Joint General Secretary

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PM goes to Saudi Arabia next month

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will pay a three-day official visit to Saudi Arabia from August 12 at the invitation of King Abdullah bin AbdelAziz.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin disclosed this yesterday during a briefing with diplomatic correspondents at the foreign ministry.

Earlier, the prime minister visited Kuwait in April and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in May this year.

Asked if the Saudi king will pay an official visit to Bangladesh, the foreign secretary said Bangladesh would be very happy to receive him.

"Our bilateral relations are not only profound but brotherly and spiritual," the foreign secretary said.

64 more dengue patients admitted to city hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With another 64 admitted to different government and private hospitals and clinics in the capital yesterday, the number of dengue patients reached 554.

Twelve dengue patients were admitted to Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital yesterday while eight others were admitted to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital.

Others were admitted to Tawhida Hospital, Crescent Hospital, Dhaka Medical College

Hospital, Ibn Sina Hospital, Comfort Hospital, Meghna General Hospital, Sumona Clinic, Khidmah Hospital, BDR Hospital, Jahangirnagar Hospital, Dhaka Mahanagar General Hospital, Padma General Hospital, Monoara General Hospital, Mitford Hospital, Birdem Hospital and Padma General Hospital.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is conducting a vigorous anti-dengue campaign in different parts of the city to combat the menace, says a press release.

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2 top JMB cadres held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Gafargaon police arrested an Ehsar member of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from a mosque at Gafargaon upazila Sunday night while a top aide to Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai was arrested in Bagmara, Rajshahi yesterday.

Police said they raided the mosque on a tip-off and arrested Monirul Islam Monir, 30, of Char Purapathia village under Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj.

The militant leader was produced before a court today with a three-day remand prayer.

Magistrate Shefali Begum granted for two days' remand.

In a separate operation yesterday, police arrested a top JMB militant, who is also a close associate of Bangla Bhai, from a betel leaf field at Bagmara upazila.

The arrestee, Belal Hejati, son of

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PHOTO: STAR

Police escort to the court building a few of the 267 people picked up in the capital yesterday, which the opposition alleged is a planned measure of the alliance government to foil its road march today.

Open fire on attackers

Commerce minister tells garment factory owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed yesterday asked the garment owners to open fire in case of attacks on their factories in future.

"Sometimes you have to be tough. You can wait for one or two incidents and then straight fire on the attackers to save your factories," he said referring to the recent labour unrest in the readymade garment sector.

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a meeting with the garment owners at Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and

Exporters Association (BGMEA) office in Dhaka.

Hafizuddin, however, urged the owners to try their best to raise the salary of the garment workers and implement the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed at a tripartite meeting in June.

"The owners should increase the workers' salary so that they can lead a decent life. At the same time, there should not be any unrealistic demand from the workers' side as well," the minister observed.

Speaking at the meeting, former BGMEA president Annisul Huq said the workers are demanding a salary

hike of an astronomical 525 per cent and they are demanding Tk 24,425 a month for a grade-I worker. The industry cannot afford to meet such demands, he added.

There are several hundred sick garment factories and this is one of the three major problems the apparel sector is faced with, he said adding that a large number of factories are barely surviving on marginal profit.

Annisul represents BGMEA in the six-member board formed by the government to recommend a pay scale for the workers.

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Finance finds it unusual to spend twice for same purpose

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The finance ministry is scrutinising the legal aspects of spending twice for preparing the voter list as the Election Commission (EC) received Tk 45 crore from it last fiscal year and is now demanding another Tk 40 crore.

The ministry finds it unusual to spend twice for the same purpose. Sources said it is now reviewing the Supreme Court's recent order on voter listing and the EC proposal to see if a second allocation leads to audit objection or any legal tangle in the future.

The EC spent Tk 45 crore for preparing a fresh voter list which was later declared illegal by the Supreme Court. The EC ultimately

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KARNAPHULI BRIDGE

Govt asked to suspend all activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following the filing of a public interest litigation writ, the High Court (HC) yesterday ordered the government to suspend all activities on the pier-based third Karnaphuli bridge for seven days.

The seven days suspension order was given as the government sought time to respond to the petition seeking a stay order on the construction of the pier-based Karnaphuli bridge. The petition asked the court to order the authorities concerned to build a suspension bridge as per the recommendation of experts of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

Supreme Court (SC) advocate Imtiaz Uddin Ahmed Asif filed the petition on Sunday. On July 20, Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed and Associates

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Aunt deserts Nigerian boy at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An eleven-year-old boy, claiming to be Nigerian, was presumably deserted by his aunt at Zia International Airport (ZIA) Sunday.

The boy has been in custody of the immigration police since Sunday morning after the ZIA security personnel spotted him wandering around inside the terminal on closed circuit TV and informed the immigration police.

The boy said that his name was Aloysius, his aunt's name was Rose, his father's name was Abache Richard, mother's name Abache Alice and that his parents lived in London.

He, however, failed to provide anyone's address.

Aloysius said his passport was in his aunt's possession and the colour of their passport is red.

Acting on the information gathered from the youngster, the immigration police checked with an Emirates flight but could not

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