

15,000 UN troops for Lebanon too many

Says Chirac as more French peacekeepers arrive

REUTERS, Beirut

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said yesterday he could raise 15,000 troops for a United Nations force mandated to police a truce between Israel and Hezbollah, but France called the target excessive.

European and other nations have been dithering over how many troops to dispatch on the potentially hazardous mission, despite prompting from the United States, Israel and others.

Asked before talks with European foreign ministers whether he expected to be able to raise all the troops he is seeking, Annan replied: "Not today, but I will get the 15,000."

But French President Jacques Chirac, whose diplomats helped draft the August 11 Security Council resolution that authorised up to 15,000 peacekeepers to deploy in Lebanon, said he was unsure how many troops were needed but that 15,000 was too many. The number was "completely excessive," Chirac told a news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Paris.

"It doesn't really make sense. So what is the right number, 4,000, 5,000 or 6,000? I don't know," he said.

Italy has offered up to 3,000 troops and France boosted its pledge to 2,000 on the eve of the Brussels meeting. Belgium pledged to take part in the force on Friday. Other possible troop contributors include Spain, Poland and Finland.

About 150 French soldiers arrived by ship in Lebanon's southern port of Naqoura on Friday to join 50 extra troops already sent as part of France's initial offer of 200.

European Union president Finland, which will chair the talks in Brussels, said the bloc's credibility was at stake and that it must show it can deploy rapidly to protect a fragile truce.

UN officials want a strong European contingent alongside a sizeable Muslim component in the expanded Unifil force, which is to work with 15,000 Lebanese troops

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Army man, son killed in road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An army officer and his university going son were killed in a road accident on the city's Airport Road yesterday morning.

The deceased are Shajahan Ali, 52, a senior warrant officer of Bangladesh Army, and Sajjad Hossain, 24, a student of Computer Engineering and Technology Department of Asian University, Uttara.

At around 9:00am, Shajahan started on a motorbike with his son Sajjad from their Manikdi residence in cantonment area for the Asian University where Sajjad's Honours final examination was

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PHOTO: STAR

Relatives wail over the death of army officer Shajahan and his university going son Sajjad in an accident on the Airport Road yesterday.

US warns Syria against defying UN arms ban

AFP, Washington

The United States warned Syria Thursday against flouting a UN imposed arms embargo along the Lebanese border designed to prevent any weapons from reaching the Shia militant group Hezbollah.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had expressed strong opposition to the deployment of United Nations troops to enforce the embargo along his country's border with Lebanon, saying such a move would be "hostile" to Syria and create problems between the two nations.

Damascus has also threatened to close its border with Lebanon if

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PHOTO: STAR

Repaired and beautified only a few months ago on the occasion of the Saarc summit, this footpath opposite to the Sheraton Hotel now undergoes dismantling as Dhaka City Corporation has taken a road extension programme.

ALLEGATIONS IN COX'S BAZAR

Genuine voters left out, Rohingyas still on list

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Around 20 thousand Rohingya refugees have been included in the updated voter list in six upazilas of Cox's Bazar while thousands of eligible voters left out for allegiance to the opposition parties, locals and different political parties alleged.

The district election officials recently admitted to The Daily Star that a large number of Rohingyas might have been enrolled as voters.

Additional Election Officer SM Shahadat Hosain said they are verifying the list and have already excluded many such names from it.

Shoaibur Rahman, joint secretary of Relief and Refugee Repatriation Commission, also did not rule out the possibility of many

Rohingyas' names being on the voter roll.

"There are at least 3,00,000 Rohingyas living illegally in different areas of Cox's Bazar district. I guess many of them have been put on the list," Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

District administration officials said they had prepared a list that says as of July last year the number of Rohingya refugees totalled 50,525. Since then, many more might have crossed the border into Bangladesh.

The actual number of Rohingyas in the area would be much higher and it is very difficult to identify them as they have been assimilated into the local people. It is likely that they have been included as voters on instructions from a section of political leaders, explained the officials.

Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohsin Chowdhury said as Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas share borders with Myanmar, it is much easier for the Rohingyas to enter the Bangladesh territory here.

A committee has been formed to trace Rohingyas on the updated voter list, official sources at the upazilas said.

Sources claimed that in Teknaf, Ukhia and Ramu upazilas, at least 20 thousand Rohingya refugees have been included in the voter list. The number of female Rohingya voters is higher than that of the males, they said.

In Chakoria, Maheshkhali and Cox's Bazar Sadar, the number of

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Regional dialogue in Bogra today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 13th regional dialogue on "National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" will be held in Bogra today.

It is being held as part of a series of programmes jointly organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Channel.

Eminent academics and professionals, development and cultural activists, public representatives and political leaders and civil society representatives of the district will speak at the dialogue beginning at 9:00am.

Members of the 'Nagorik Committee 2006, who are preparing a Vision Paper for Bangladesh, will also be present at the dialogue to receive public feedback.

MANZURUL MURDER

Khulna AL men demand fresh investigation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday demanded immediate reinvestigation of city AL president Manzurul Imam murder case as the 'godfathers and financiers' of the killing were left out of the charge sheet which was submitted on March 11, 2004.

Manzurul Imam Smirty Parishad also raised the demand

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6 bombs found in Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur

Six bombs were found at Kalampur village in Kaliakoir upazila of the district yesterday afternoon.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bombs from a "gazari" plantation at the village.

The law enforcers deactivated the bombs and took them to Kaliakoir Police Station.

Police said the unidentified miscreants kept the bombs at the village to create panic among the locals.



PHOTO: STAR

A room of the Nawabpur house that robbers left ransacked after looting valuables yesterday.

Shop owner killed as 10 shops gutted in Cox's Bazar, Gazipur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A shop owner was burned alive and 10 shops were gutted in two incidents of fire in Cox's Bazar and Gazipur district headquarters yesterday.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent reported that a fire broke out at a market in Ramu upazila early yesterday, killing a shop owner and damaging a rice mill and six shops.

The dead was identified as Nona Pal, 40, owner of a grocery shop. He hailed from Haldarkul village under the upazila.

Sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop of the market at about 4:30 am and soon engulfed the adjoining shops.

They said Nona Pal died as he got trapped inside a burning shop.

On information, fire fighters from Cox's Bazar rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after a three-hour frantic effort.

In Gazipur, fire damaged four shops near Central Mosque at Gazipur Bazar at about 10:00am, according to our correspondent.

The fire originated from a shop named Russell Hardware and soon spread to the adjacent shops.

The fire fighters extinguished the blaze within half an hour.

Khaleda flouting promise by withdrawing graft cases

Hasina alleges at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina criticised Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday for claiming that she has checked corruption while withdrawing corruption cases one after another.

"She [Khaleda Zia] came to power declaring a battle against corruption, and now she is withdrawing corruption cases and claiming that she has stopped corruption," Hasina said at a discussion meeting at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in the city.

Sammilita Nagorik Samaj organised the discussion titled "Aesthetic thoughts of Bangabandhu" in observance of August 15, the day when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman along with most of his family members was assassinated in 1975.

"While patronising criminals and militants who are blasting bombs, killing people, and resorting to criminal activities, the PM claims that she has stopped crime," Hasina said. She urged people to save the country from these falsehoods.

Dr Atiur Rahman presented a keynote paper at the discussion chaired by Nagorik Samaj Convenor Kamal Lohani. Renowned theatre personality Ramendu Majumder and Prof Mostafa Nurul Islam took part in the discussion on the paper.

The AL chief said the nation has been deprived of knowing about the true glorious history of the country and its movements, including the

Liberation War, due to the present government's distortion of the history.

The anti-Liberation War forces have been distorting the nation's history since the killing of Bangabandhu as they do not believe in the country's independence, she said.

Hasina, Bangabandhu's eldest daughter, said her father loved reading, sport, cultural activities and reciting.

Bangabandhu took the "Joy Bangla" slogan from one of Kazi Nazrul Islam's poems but the then Pakistani rulers banned the slogan, Hasina said.

On Bangabandhu's farsightedness, Hasina said, "I went to

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No crisis of diesel or any other fuel

Claim BPC officials

ABDULLAH-AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has necessary reserves of diesel fuel while all required procedures for further imports are also completed to keep sufficient stock to last until the end of September, claimed officials in BPC headquarters in Chittagong.

They further claimed that there is no crisis of diesel or any other fuel. The BPC stock is more than enough for the country.

"To ensure uninterrupted supply of diesel to the consumers, BPC started making a daily supply of as much as 9000 tons of diesel since Thursday while the highest daily consumption of diesel stands at 7000 tons," said a high official of BPC talking to The Daily Star.

The BPC raised the quantity of diesel supply following a directive from Adviser to the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry Mahmudur Rahman. Mahmudur held a meeting with BPC officials and others including those from the three marketing companies of BPC at its headquarters in Chittagong

on Wednesday.

Refuting the allegation of rationing of diesel supply, BPC officials said the state-run enterprise had been increasing the supply of diesel by 10-20 percent every year.

BPC Director [Marketing] AFM Ishaq, giving official statistics, said the average daily supply of diesel in the last 23 days since August 1 was 5954 tons against 5377 tons of the corresponding period of last year.

Moreover, as per requirement, the daily supply of diesel in the last few days ranged from 6500 tons to 7000 tons, he added.

The BPC director showed that the official figure of diesel reserves stood at 1,16,000 tons on Thursday and this was the country's reserve for 16 days.

"Besides, another 70,000 tons of diesel is scheduled to arrive within the next 15 days while about 15,000 tons of diesel will be available from the state-run Eastern Refinery Ltd during this time, he said while talking to The Daily Star on Thursday.

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Teenage soldier kills himself fearing he may have to fire on Iraq children

AFP, London

British Private Jason Chelsea committed suicide after he was allegedly told by his commanders that he could be ordered to fire on child suicide bombers in an upcoming tour of duty in Iraq, newspapers reported on Friday.

His mother said Thursday that before dying, the 19-year-old told her: "I can't go out there and shoot at young children. I just can't go to Iraq. I don't care what side they are on. I can't do it," The Independent reported.

The Times quoted army sources as saying, however, that there was no evidence that Iraqi insurgents used young children as suicide bombers and that pre-deployment training did not include any such warnings.

At home on leave, Chelsea, who had previously served in Germany and Cyprus, took 60 painkillers and then slashed his wrists on the night of August 10. He died on August 14 from irreparable damage done to his liver, and would not have survived a transplant, doctors told his parents.

Chelsea had previously attempted to commit suicide in

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An ugly alliance

Says The Economist on Khaleda-Ershad deal

Internationally reputed news magazine, The Economist, in its August 12, 2006 issue published a report on the almost done deal of including former dictator HM Ershad's Jatiya Party in the ruling coalition. The following is the full text of the report:

For a crowded and impoverished country, blighted by misrule, natural disasters and notable to many outsiders for Islamist terrorism, Bangladesh has done rather well in recent years. Under a four party ruling coalition, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the economy has grown tenaciously, at 6.7% in the last financial year. Backed by generous remittances and a fast-growing garment industry, the country has made good use of its only abundant resource, labour. Yet its sudden growth spurt, as so often in poor places, has exacerbated hardships too. Rising inflation has made the government increasingly unpopular, so have shortages of power, food and foreign exchange. With elections due in January, that may explain an ugly pact this week between the BNP and the country's disgraced former dictator, Hossain Mohammad Ershad.

Sixteen years after the party and the Awami League, now the main opposition party, joined hands to

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Self-immolation threat by jute workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

About a hundred workers and employees of eight jute mills at Khulna-Jessore industrial belt yesterday vowed to go for self-immolation if the government does not accede to their eight-point demand.

In each of the eight jute mills, the workers and employees have formed a group of 12 people who may commit self-immolation during the daylong road and railway barricade programme thrown by Patkal Sangram Parishad on August 29 as part of their ongoing movement.

The announcement for self-immolation came from a big rally at Patkal Sangram Parishad at Khalishpur industrial belt with parishad convener Sarder Motaahar Uddin in the chair.

Similar protest rallies were also held at Atra and Rajhat industrial belts.

On August 27, the parishad will

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Wazed Miah hospitalised

UNB, Dhaka

Dr Wazed Miah, a renowned nuclear scientist and husband of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, was yesterday admitted to Lab Aid Cardiac Hospital with chest pain.

"He fell sick in the afternoon and was rushed to the hospital," said an Awami League (AL) source.

Wazed Miah has been suffering from cardiac problem, the source added.

Prayer Timing		
August 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		