

NATO chief for bigger EU, UN role in Afghanistan

AFP, Berlin

NATO chief Jaap de Hoop Scheffer urged the UN and the European Union to beef up their role in Afghanistan, calling the mission there "the most important operation" for the Atlantic alliance.

In an interview published yesterday in the German daily Tagesspiegel, De Hoop Scheffer said NATO could help lay the groundwork for Afghanistan's long-term stability but the country needed more than military support.

"As NATO secretary general, I ensure that Afghanistan has a prominent place on NATO's radar screen," he said.

"But I believe that Afghanistan must be equally present on the radar screen of the European Union, the United Nations, the G8 and other international organisations," he added, referring to the Group of Eight industrialised nations.

He warned that neglect of Afghanistan would be a fatal

mistake.

"If we do not reinforce our engagement in Afghanistan, Afghanistan will come to us. It will again become an exporter of terror. The consequences will be felt in Amsterdam or Berlin or London or New York."

The Dutchman said international organisations such as the EU and the UN could do more in areas such as fighting the drug trade, in particular by viewing the issue as a development problem.

"Do we have a real, internationally coordinated anti-drug strategy? I don't think so," he said.

"You cannot fight drugs simply by burning down poppy fields. Then the farmer asks himself, how can I feed my family?"

He said there was no need for "new and complicated structures" to organise international activities in Afghanistan, but added that better coordination was key.

"NATO cannot solve all the problems in Afghanistan on its own," he said.

At the end of the day, the

answer in Afghanistan cannot be a military one. The answer is nation-building and development."

NATO has faced a spike in violence in Afghanistan linked to the hardline Taliban movement which the US-led coalition toppled from government in late 2001.

The alliance has appealed for member states to provide additional soldiers to bolster the 31,000 troops stationed in the country.

De Hoop Scheffer said NATO would be forced in the future to refine its concept of security, including expanding its operations to include protecting energy supplies.

"I could imagine that NATO with its naval forces could play a role in securing sea routes for oil and energy transports," he said.

"We are also talking about protecting critical infrastructure in the energy sector against terrorist threats."

College student shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college student was gunned down in front of a restaurant at Elephant Road in the city last night.

The victim was identified as Rakib Hasan, 23, a student of Tejaon College and resident of Jahuri Mahalla at Mohammadpur in the city.

Rakib went out of his house after receiving a call from an unidentified caller at 7:30pm, his younger brother Nishan said.

New Market police rushed Rakib to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition where doctors declared him dead.

Police said the miscreants shot him point-blank in the head.

BDR intensifies patrolling across border at Juri UZ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulavibazar

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has strengthened its patrolling across the border at Juri upazila to check the notorious criminals so that they can't cross the border.

BDR has taken this step across the border belt of Fultala, Shliua and Mukam Bari since Tuesday. People of the local areas said Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has also increased their strength across the border. BDR source at Juri office has confirmed this matter.

BNP men ransack Khagrachhari AL leaders' business centres, houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

At least three activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured and business centres and houses of several Awami League leaders were ransacked and torched in attacks by alleged BNP activists over taking control of the areas here in Khagrachhari yesterday and on Monday night.

The seriously injured are Mohammad Zisan, 20, law affairs secretary of College Chhatra League, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, 25, a BCL district committee member, and Mohammad Khorsed Alam, 26, an activist of Matiranga upazila BCL.

Alleged BNP cadres also ransacked the houses of AL leader Master Firoz at Garangghiya, former district livestock officer's house in Sadar upazila and some business centres of AL activists at Matiranga Upazila.

Though three cases were filed with Sadar and Matiranga police stations, no BNP men were arrested in this connection.

District Jubo Dal President Abdus Salam, however, said none of his party men are responsible for the attack. It is a dirty game of AL activists, he added.

Bashir Uddin, officer-in-charge of Sadar police, declined to comment in this regard.

Month-long breast cancer awareness programme begins

A month-long programme for raising awareness about breast cancer among people started at Ahsania Mission Cancer Detection Centre and Hospital at Mirpur in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Director of the hospital Prof Dr MA Hai inaugurated the programme at a simple ceremony on the hospital premises. Dr Shamim-ul-Maula, Dr Selim Reza and Dr Major (Retd) Taslima Firdaus spoke on the occasion. Among others, Brigadier General (Retd) Syed Fazle Rabbi, Dr Nahid Sultana, Dr Kamelia Akther and other doctors and nurses of the hospital were present on the occasion.

Dr Hai said that around 25 per cent of the women cancer patients suffer from breast cancer and 90 per cent of such cases can be cured if detected at the initial stage. Breast self examination should be practiced by all adult women regularly. Throughout the month of November they will undertake various awareness raising activities including distribution of leaflets and other information materials on breast cancer, demonstration of breast self examination, free medical advice etc.

There will be special concessions on mammography and other clinical examinations as well as on breast surgery. The services will be available at the hospital from 10:00am to 12:30pm everyday excepting the government holidays.



PHOTO: STAR

Sammita Sangskritik Jote forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding autonomy of state-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar.

3 killed in Sylhet road accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

Three people were killed in separate road accidents in Sylhet yesterday.

Of them, two young men were killed when a motorcycle hit a passenger bus on Sylhet-Sunamganj Road at Lalargaon, about 8 kilometers off the Sylhet city, at 11:30am.

The dead were identified as Abul Khayer, 23 and Sumon Miah, 26. They were going to Sylhet city from Govindganj of Chhatak riding the motorbike.

The incident took place as the bikers tried to overtake a truck. Khayer and Sumon of village Lkeshwar under Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj died on the spot.

Meanwhile, a speeding minibus ran over Kokil Miah, 35, a rikshawpuller, at Hajipur on Sylhet-Zakiganj Road at 11:00am, leaving him dead on the spot.

The bodies were sent to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College for autopsy.

BSF returns 5 kidnapped Bangladeshis

Bss, Rangpur

Border Security Force (BSF) of India yesterday returned five Bangladeshi farm labourers.

The labourers were kidnapped by the Indian border security forces from Durgapur border under Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat district on Tuesday.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the kidnapped Bangladeshis were returned after a company commander level flag meeting between BDR and BSF at Durgapur border yesterday.

Poor become poorer despite steady growth

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Development activities of the country did not take place on the basis of national priority or plans. They were undertaken on the basis of influence of ministers or lawmakers of the ruling parties. In other words, the powerful ones 'bagged' more development programmes aimed at their constituency than those who had lesser or no power. This also implies that development activities were done to ensure that the ministers or MPs get re-elected at the cost of the national exchequer.

A recent survey of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) finds that poverty in some constituencies increased in the last five years and decreased or slightly increased in other areas. This has happened because the government did not undertake development programmes on the basis of real priority.

The BNP in its election manifesto had promised to bring more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) than ever before. But records do not show any significant rise in the FDI from 2001 to 2004 except in 2005 when investment by cellphone companies changed the volume. However, the international cellphone companies also take out millions of dollars in profit.

Again, the annual FDI growth rate during 1997 to 2001 on an average was 29 percent each year. In contrast, this rate during 2002 to 2005 was on an average 28 percent each year. In other words, the FDI growth during the alliance government rule is 1 percentage point lower than that in the previous regime.

But the BNP-led government had a lot of opportunities to increase the FDI and create new employment that it failed to seize. For instance, the government declined to give licence to Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) for five years until it gave the go-ahead last month. The KEPZ was all set to launch from 2002 and it had outlined an investment of \$1 billion in manufacturing sector in addition to employing 100,000 people. Similarly, it could not tap Indian giant Tata's \$3 billion investment proposal.

There were some noble initiatives from the government in regards to reform and setting new rules and institutions to curb corruption and ensure transparency. But none of these was implemented properly and as a result, none saw the intended outcomes.

Some reform measures were actually implemented just to fulfill conditions imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) against certain loans. As a result, these reforms

faced stiff resistance from within the government.

Immediate past finance minister M Saifur Rahman has served three different governments of the BNP and the four-party alliance different times. Before his last term, Saifur commanded strong authority but this time his authority faced a lot of opposition within the government and in many instances, he had to change his stand on certain issues. For instance, he had opposed all projects under Supplier's Credit and then retreated from his hard position.

GDP & POVERTY

The annual GDP growth rate during the previous Awami League (AL) regime was 5.34 percent on an average. During the BNP-led regime, this rate on an average increased to 5.68 percent. But more significantly, the growth rate in the last three years exceeded 6 percent. Consequently, it contributed broadly to poverty reduction.

Poverty has been reduced by 1.78 percent per year on an average in the last five years. In the previous decade, this rate was 1 percent.

But at the same time, social disparity continued increasing in the last five years, while the income level of the poor has decreased. According to the BBS 2005 survey on household income and expenditure, the disparity increased to 0.467 points in 2005 from 0.451 in 2000. Again, this disparity focuses on 50 percent of the population, who represent only 20 percent of the nation's income.

Poverty has been reduced by 14.7 percentage point in Dhaka Division in the last five years, 11.7 percentage point in Chittagong and 8.6 percentage point in Sylhet. But the scenario was bleak in the poverty-prone areas when the statistics show poverty has declined by 5.3 percentage point in Rajshahi and 1.1 percentage point in Barisal, while it has been increased by 0.4 percentage point in Khulna Division.

Haphazard and unplanned approval and implementation of development programmes have caused such unbalanced poverty reduction.

Again, high inflation overshadowed the benefits of poverty reduction. During the AL regime, inflation was largely in control, though the 1998 flood had pushed it up to 8.7 percent and kept it at a high of 7.1 percent in 1999. But the AL government brought it down to 2.8 percent in 2000 and 1.9 percent in 2001. But the inflation under the BNP-led government marked a steady rise. It went up to 2.8 percent in 2002, 4.4 percent in 2003, 5.8 percent in 2004, 6.5 percent in 2005 and over 7 percent in 2006.



Major (Retd) Dr Taslima Firdaus speaks at the inaugural ceremony of a month-long programme for raising awareness about breast cancer among people at Ahsania Mission Cancer Detection Centre and Hospital at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

Lalmonirhat chamber observes hartal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The dawn-to-dusk hartal called by Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Lalmonirhat was observed peacefully in the town yesterday.

All commercial centres in Lalmonirhat town remained closed and the vehicles remained static during the hartal hours.

Lalmonirhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry called the day long hartal on Tuesday following imprisonment of three businessmen by Sadar police.

The chamber leaders alleged that police unlawfully arrested three of the businessmen and sent them to jail after a beating.

Witnesses said, police indiscriminately charged stick on Tuesday evening at Goshala bazaar and arrested twenty five people including three businessmen.

Police Superintendent Mesbah Uddin said, police arrested a number of people from Goshala bazaar but many of them were freed after primary interrogation.

Those businessmen were arrested under section 151 as there were certain allegations against them, he added.

Lalmonirhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry also held a rally at the municipality market yesterday afternoon. The business leaders of the district held a rally at Goshala bazaar presided by Sirajul Islam.

They demanded immediate release of the businessmen.



PHOTO: PID

A delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami calls on President and Chief Adviser of caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

Death anniversary



The seventh death anniversary of Begum Habibunnesa, mother of Fakir Alamgir, popular folk singer and president of Rishij Shilpi

Goshti, will be held tomorrow, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be at the Matir mosque at Chowdhury Para of city's Khilgaon area after Asr prayers.

Special prayers will also be held at Kalamridha village under Bhanga thana in Faridpur.

Chehlum of Prof Aftab tomorrow

Chehlum of freedom fighter Dr Aftab Ahmad, a professor at the Department of Political Science of Dhaka University, will be held at Mirpur Freedom Fighters' and Intellectuals' Graveyard in the city after Jum'a prayers and at his residence at 19/G, Fuller Road after Asr prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

All teachers, officers and employees of Dhaka University and relatives, friends and admirers of late Prof Aftab have been requested to attend the programme.

Mayor tried to create a reign of terror in Ctg: Noman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury enforced the blockade programme and indefinite hartal in Chittagong before the handover of power to the caretaker government in a bid to create a reign of terror in the name of 14-party combine, said BNP Joint Secretary General Abdullah Al Noman yesterday.

As the hartal was not part of the central programme of Awami League-led 14-party, the mayor's programmes exposed his personal whims, he said at a press conference at the Chittagong Club in the port city.

"In his recent speeches, Mohiuddin also gave a death threat to me in a bid to inflame criminal activities," alleged the former minister for livestock and fisheries.

A speech that is full of abusive terms, threats and provocations for violence can never be that of any political party or politician, he observed.

"And, finally on Tuesday he also

warned me, which appeared in some dailies too, to give up politics and threatened to come to the streets with bombs if I go on with my political activities", Noman said.

Noman also accused Mohiuddin of making efforts to paralyse Chittagong port by putting up barricades on Dhaka-Chittagong highway from Pahartali to Mirsarai.

Replying to a question, Noman said actually Mohiuddin made a futile effort to forge a oust government movement from Chittagong which was foiled by the people of Chittagong proving him a "paper tiger".

Chittagong city Jamaat Ameer Moulana Shamsul Islam, BNP leader Dostagir Chowdhury, MA Sabur and Abu Sufian were also present at the press conference among others.

WEATHER TODAY

Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain or drizzle is likely at one or two places over all the divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.3 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 19.0 degree Celsius at Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5.19pm today and rises at 6:06am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in in celsius
percentage		
Dhaka	Max 27.1 Min 24.0	Morning 84 Evening 86
Chittagong	33.0 25.3	77 70
Rajshahi	31.2 21.4	79 69
Khulna	29.5 23.5	87 85
Barisal	30.5 23.0	95 87
Sylhet	30.0 22.7	78 75
Cox's Bazar	33.3 24.2	73 72

DHAKA TODAY

Blue for peace

Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and civil society members will form a human chain as part of their 'Blue for peace' programme. Venue: Satmasjid Road. Time: 4:30pm.

Roundtable

A roundtable on 'Microfinance vision Bangladesh (Global Microcredit Summit 2006: Bangladesh perspective and expectation)' will be held. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 9:00am.

Debate

The delegation of the European Commission and Vision 2021 Forum jointly organise a debate on 'Bangladesh 2021: From vision to reality'. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:30am.