

# 17 militants killed in northwest Pakistan

Taliban kidnap 25 police recruits

AFP, Islamabad/Peshawar

At least 17 militants were killed yesterday when troops backed by helicopter gunships destroyed rebel hideouts in Swat valley in Pakistan's northwest, the army said. Gunships targeted the strongholds of fighters loyal to Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah in a follow-up to Wednesday's operation in the same region, which killed 30 militants, an army spokesman said. "Today troops backed by helicopter gunships killed at least 17 militants including three commanders of Fazlullah," Major Nasir Ali told AFP. Pakistan's army has intensified its campaign in the scenic valley, once a tourist hotspot, in recent weeks against Fazlullah's fighters, killing hundreds of them. Naveed said efforts were under-

Meanwhile, Taliban militants kidnapped 25 police recruits while they were travelling to a training centre in northwestern Pakistan, a senior police official said yesterday. The trainees were kidnapped late Wednesday in lawless Orakzai tribal district bordering Afghanistan while they were en route to a police college in the town of Hangu, said provincial police chief Malik Mohammad Naveed. "They were kidnapped by Taliban," Naveed told AFP after earlier reports that the trainees had gone missing. Other police officials said two of the trainees were freed by the Taliban after they pretended to be civilians, while the 25 others were forced from their van and into waiting vehicles. The two recruits alerted police.

way to try to secure their safe release. The Pakistani military is battling Taliban militants in the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan and the northwestern Swat valley. The United States says Pakistan's remote border areas are a safe haven for al-Qaeda and Taliban rebels and are being used as a launching pad for attacks on US-led coalition troops in neighbouring Afghanistan. Also on Wednesday, Pakistan said at least 15 people were killed in a cross-border raid by Afghanistan-based international forces, which reportedly took place in a tribal area that has become a haven for militants. Both the coalition and separate Nato-led security force in Afghanistan said they had no knowledge of any such raid.

# India flood rescue hits crucial stage

AFP, Chandpur Bhangaha

Efforts to rescue tens of thousands of villagers cut off by a monsoon-swollen river in northern India were reaching a critical stage yesterday, aid workers and evacuees said. Those who have escaped Bihar state's worst-hit areas say food is running out and people are drinking the muddy flood water, while aid workers speak of "grim" conditions. "We haven't had anything to eat for five days," said Murti Shah, who finally got out of her village in worst-hit Madhepura district after spending two weeks on a school's rooftop munching through the family's supplies of grain. "We drank the flood waters." Asked if she had boiled the water first, she looked amazed. "How would we boil it?" she asked. "We have no utensils. We have nothing. Everything is underwater." Many villagers in the area, submerged after the Kosi river breached its defences upstream in

Nepal and swung east, have lost their lives trying to make it to safety. "My uncle was on a tree and when he tried to get down he was washed away by the current," said 30-year-old Anil Kumar Bhaskar, who also made it out Wednesday on a navy boat. "Later we found his body in the reeds." State government warnings to evacuate when the river first broke through its flood walls have kept the death toll low, with some 100 people drowned so far even though the floods have affected at least three million. Over 700,000 people have been evacuated from flooded areas, but rescuing the tens of thousands more villagers still stranded in the coming days is vital to prevent more deaths, rescuers and survivors say. "We are getting to areas we haven't been able to get to before," said Rajeev Ahluwalia, an assistant commander with India's National Disaster Response Force, set up after the 2004 tsunami.



Indian flood-affected villagers walk through water in Laxmipur District some 400km north-east of Patna on Wednesday. Efforts to rescue tens of thousands of villagers in northern India still cut off by a monsoon-swollen river have entered a critical stage, aid workers and evacuees say.

# Pak court adjourns Sharif trial hearing till Oct 7

PTI, Islamabad

A Pakistani court on Thursday adjourned till October seven the hearing of an application seeking reopening of the trial of corruption cases against former Premier Nawaz Sharif, his brother Shabbaz and other members of their family. A judge of a special court in Rawalpindi, which took up the application for reopening the cases adjourned the matter till Oct 7 and said he will not proceed with the matter as many judges of anti-corruption courts are currently on leave.

A move by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to reopen trial of the eight-year old cases had sparked a war of words between the ruling PPP and its former ally PML-N. The move by the NAB, which is under the law ministry, to reopen the cases came just nine days after Sharif pulled the PML-N out of the PPP-led ruling coalition. The cases were indefinitely adjourned on technical grounds by an anti-corruption court last month. PML-N leaders said the move by the NAB appeared to be aimed at using anti-corruption courts against Sharif. PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal, a close aide of Sharif, said pursuing the cases smacked of "political bankruptcy".



Pakistani lawyers shout anti-government slogans in front of the Supreme Court Building during a protest in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistani riot police beat lawyers with sticks demanding the reinstatement of dozens of judges sacked by former president Pervez Musharraf.

# US inches towards Indian nuclear deal

AFP, Vienna

The United States inched towards a deal Thursday in its efforts to persuade nuclear supplier nations to lift a 34-year-old embargo on trade with India, a diplomat at negotiations said. "One of the representatives said that a deal was 'within reach'," the diplomat told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity at the closed-door meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). The diplomat declined to predict how soon that might be. It is the second time in two weeks that the highly secretive 45-member NSG, which controls the export and sale of nuclear technology, has met to try and agree a change to its rules. Earlier, US delegation head,

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns, had insisted Washington was making progress. "I believe that we're making steady progress in this process and that we'll continue to make progress," Burns told reporters. NSG rules ban nuclear trade with India because it refuses to sign the NPT, developed atomic bombs in secret and conducted its first nuclear test in 1974. But Washington wants a special waiver so that the US can share with India its technology and know-how in the civilian nuclear field. The deal, the US argues, will bring India into the NPT fold and help combat global warming by allowing India to develop low-polluting nuclear energy.

# Iran risks 'catastrophe' of Israeli strike: Sarkozy

AFP, Damascus

French President Nicolas Sarkozy warned Iran yesterday that its determination to press on with its controversial nuclear drive risked an Israeli strike that would be a "catastrophe." "Iran is taking a major risk by continuing the process of seeking nuclear technology for military ends," Sarkozy said at a four-way summit in Damascus with the leaders of Syria, Qatar and Turkey. "Because one day, no matter which Israeli government is in power, one morning we will awake to find Israel has attacked," Sarkozy said on the second day of a landmark visit to Syria. "It's not a question of whether it

is legitimate or intelligent or not... It would be a catastrophe, and we must avoid such a catastrophe." Iran has consistently denied that its nuclear programme is aimed at building an atomic bomb and says it wants only to generate energy for its growing population. But Tehran risks a fourth round of UN sanctions over its failure to abide by international calls to freeze uranium enrichment, a process, which makes nuclear fuel but can also be used to build the core of a nuclear weapon. Meanwhile Sarkozy said on Thursday that pulling out of Afghanistan, where 10 French troops were killed by the Taliban last month, would amount to abandoning nuclear-armed Pakistan.

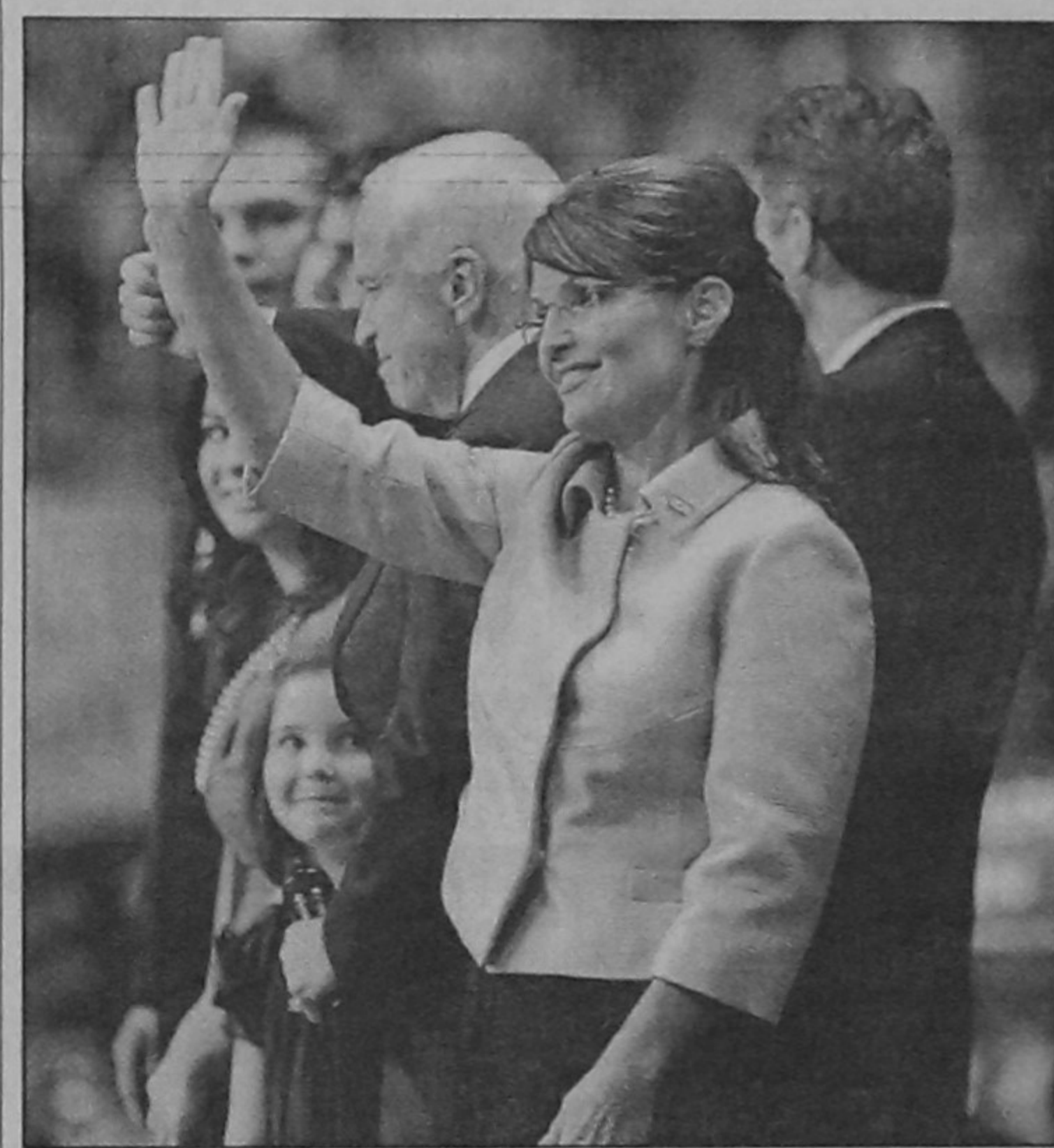
"If we abandon Afghanistan we will be abandoning Pakistan, which doesn't need that. I want to remind you of one thing: that Pakistan has the nuclear bomb," he told reporters before winding up a visit to the Syrian capital. "I want to say to the French that my conviction has not changed," he said. A Taliban ambush followed by intense fighting in the Sarobi district near the Afghan capital Kabul on August 18 and 19 left 10 French soldiers dead and 21 wounded. The attack prompted a public outcry in France, with some calling for the immediate withdrawal of the 3,000 French troops serving in the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force.

# Religion-based parties

FROM PAGE 1

restrictions on their formation. According to section 20 of the SPA, no person shall form, or be a member or otherwise take part in the activities of, any communal or other association or union which in the name or on the basis of any religion has for its object, or pursues, a political purpose. The SPA also states the procedure of taking actions including imprisonment against persons involved with such association and union. The new RPO provision on registration of political parties, meanwhile, says a political party shall not be qualified for registration if any discrimination regarding religion, race, caste, language or sex is apparent in its constitution. Legal experts said if the Islamist political parties use the religion for political purpose, they cannot get registered with the EC. And if their constitutions contain discriminatory provisions regarding religion, they clearly contradict the new provision of the RPO. If the EC registers any such political party, bypassing the legal restrictions, it will have to face legal challenges, the experts fear. Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said the conditions laid down in the RPO on registration of political parties can be seen in harmony with section 20 of the SPA that prohibits formation of political parties based on religion. "It is a clear prohibition under criminal penalty. According to the Special Powers Act, there is no scope for registering the political parties based on religion," Malik told The Daily Star. Earlier during electoral reform talks, Jamaat strongly opposed the EC's proposal for incorporating the provision in the RPO while other political parties referred to the SPA saying political parties based on religion cannot be registered with the EC. In defence of drafting the proposal, the EC said they did nothing new but took the text from article 28 of the constitution that says the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. In response to the demand of political parties not based on religion for denying registration to the religion-based parties, the EC then assured them of looking into the matter when registration starts. According to the constitutions of these Islamist parties, only religious Muslims can join their organisations and be members or leaders of the parties. Legal experts say this is discriminatory. "If any organisation wants to discriminate on the basis of religion and claim such discrimination as its rights, the constitutional guarantee against non-discrimination will obviously have to be thrown away," Malik said. "So, if someone claims the right to discrimination as more important than the constitution (of the country), it is obvious that they do not respect the constitution and the fundamental policies, principles and legal basis of our state," Malik asserted. Asked to comment on the issue, Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohail Hussain told The Daily Star that the EC will abide by the constitution. On registration of religion-based political parties, he referred to the writ petition filed by Jamaat challenging a few RPO provisions and said, "We will abide by the court's order whatever it is." After the EC proposal was made into a law, Jamaat recently challenged the provision with the High Court (HC). The HC issued a rule on the government and the EC on August 28, asking

them to explain within two weeks why three sections of the RPO 2008, including the rules that restrict registration of religion-based political parties, should not be declared illegal. The 1972 constitution banned formation and functioning of any association or union or political parties on the basis of religion but the provision was later repealed during the military rule in 1976 allowing Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamist parties to resume their activities. The SPA 1974, however, is still in force and provides for such ban and punishment for violation of the provision. All successive governments since the August 1975 changeover used the SPA to suppress opponents but turned a blind eye to the ban on political activities in the name or on the basis of religion. Since the constitutional ban was repealed in 1976, Islamist political parties and organisations have mushroomed in the country. And no one knows the number of such parties and organisations as neither the government nor the EC has any accurate figures on them. Records of government intelligence agencies, however, show existence and activities of about 100 Islamist political parties and organisations since the repeal of the ban, with around 11 existing between 1964 and 1971, sources said. Of the existing parties and organisations apparently based on Islam, a few have been identified as militant outfits. Exercising the power given by the SPA, the government banned four of them: Shahadat-e-Al-Hiqma, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, and Harkatul Jihad—during 2003-2005. A few organisations were accused of patronising the militant groups. PARTIES THAT COLLECTED FORMS Sixty-five political parties collected application forms for registration with the EC as of yesterday. However, most of them only exist in names and have very little activities. The Awami League and the BNP are yet to collect the registration forms. Islamist political parties that collected the forms are Islami Shashantanto Andolon, three factions of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Jamiyate Uloomiyah Islam Bangladesh, two factions of Bangladesh Muslim League, Islamic Democratic Party, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Bangladesh Nezame Islam Party, Bangladesh Islami Biplobi Parishad, Bangladesh Islami Party, Bangladesh Islami Front and Bangladesh Jamaate Haq. Apart from the Islamist parties, Bangladesh Hindu League also collected the form. Political parties wishing to get registered with the EC must submit applications with required documents to the EC by October 15. Registration with the EC is mandatory for the parties to qualify for contesting the parliamentary elections. The 16 political parties that were invited to the talks with the EC are in a better position regarding their registration since they only have to amend their party constitutions and fulfil a number of conditions laid down in the RPO. Minor parties, who have never won any parliamentary seat since 1972, will have to prove that they have a functional central office with a committee and branch offices in at least 10 districts and 50 upazilas or metropolitan cities to be qualified for registration. Apart from the religion issue, constitutions of political parties must also conform to RPO conditions for not forming fronts or organisations with students, teachers and professionals and cut relation with overseas units.



John McCain, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, and Sarah Palin, vice presidential nominee, stand on stage together with Palin's family members after Palin's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention 2008 at the Xcel Energy Centre in St. Paul, Minnesota on Wednesday.

# Pak investigators probe attack on PM's motorcade

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani police were Thursday investigating a failed assassination attempt on Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, a day after sniper fire struck his motorcade. The premier was not in the targeted vehicle at the time, but the brazen daytime attack underscored security fears in the world's only nuclear-armed Islamic nation ahead of Saturday's presidential election. The motorcade was headed to pick Gilani up from Islamabad International Airport in the capital's twin city of Rawalpindi when the attack occurred. Security officials told AFP that police were examining the site on the main highway to the airport and that the government was awaiting a ballistics report. "Investigations are under way to determine the nature of the incident," interior secretary Kamal Shah said. A police investigator said the apparent assassination bid was likely "symbolic".

## South Asian Water (SAWA) Fellowship

for Diploma and M.Sc. Studies in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies (BCAS) announce recruitment of 3<sup>rd</sup> batch of SAWA fellows in the Post-graduate Diploma (PG.Dip.) in Water Resources Development (WRD) and M.Sc. (WRD) programs at IWFM, BUET. These degree programs are focused on IWRM.

The fellowship program is organized by the Crossing Boundaries (CB) Project (Regional Capacity Building on IWRM and Gender & Water in South Asia) with financial support from the Netherlands Government. The CB project is administered by

- SAcWATERS (South Asian Consortium for Interdisciplinary Water Resources Studies), Hyderabad, India and
- Irrigation and Water Engineering group at Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

Other partner institutes from South Asian region are Anna University and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) from India, University of Peradeniya from Sri Lanka and Nepal Engineering College from Nepal.

SAWA Fellowship

Five fellowships will be provided for pursuing PG.Dip. (WRD) (Tk.10,000/- per month for full time students).

Seven fellowships will be provided for pursuing M.Sc. (WRD) (Tk. 10,000/- per month for full time students and Tk. 7,500/- for part time students).

Fellows will have opportunities to attend regional workshops and form network with fellows in other partner institutes of South Asia.

Preference will be given to women candidates

Admission Requirement

For admission in PG Dip. (WRD) an applicant must have either a four year Bachelor's degree in Engineering/ Agriculture/ Physical science/ Biological science/ Environmental science/ Urban & Regional Planning/ Economics/ Agricultural Economics or an equivalent degree from any recognized institution. A candidate not having a four year Bachelor's degree must have a Master's degree with honors.

For admission in M.Sc. (WRD), an applicant must have either PG. Dip. (WRD) or its equivalent or Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering/ Water Resources Engineering/ Agricultural Engineering/ Environmental Science or its equivalent.

In addition, all other rules and regulations of BUET regarding admission will be applicable.

Deadlines for Application

Last date of application for admission and fellowship is September 17, 2008. Application materials can be collected from BUET Registrar's office. Classes commence on October 18, 2008.

Selection Procedure

Candidates for fellowship will be selected on the basis of two stage written examination/interviews, one for admission and one for fellowship. The schedule of examination/interviews will be announced on September 22, 2008 and can be seen at the IWFM notice board, BCAS (House 10, Road 16A, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212) and IWFM website.

Contact

For further details, please visit [www.buet.ac.bd/iwfm](http://www.buet.ac.bd/iwfm) or contact IWFM office at 9665650-80, Ext. 7506 or mail to [msalamkhan@iwfm.buet.ac.bd](mailto:msalamkhan@iwfm.buet.ac.bd). Important dates and notifications will be regularly updated on the website.

## Bangladesh Analyst

International hedge fund investing in Bangladesh seeks energetic and capable Bangladesh speaker to be its local analyst and deal finder. Will assist in the analysis of companies financial data, survey potential growth in the market, extract and interpret data to determine past financial performance and project likely future potential. Individual will work closely with the principals and will receive a good salary plus bonus based on contribution to success of the project. Residence in Dhaka required.

Requirements:

- Academic background, (BA Econ, MBA, or CFA)
- Record of achievement in investing
- Knows Bangladesh in general and its capital markets
- Independent worker who can complete research and present relevant findings with minimal input from managers.
- Passion for research, analysis and generating original insights.
- Skill with various software applications such as Excel, databases, statistical packages, graphics packages, and Word. Must be able to assemble, manipulate and format data to create reports.
- Strong analytical skills and ability to distill large amounts of data into the key relevant points for CIO.
- Proven faculty for meeting deadlines and managing multiple projects.
- Excited about working with a team of experienced asset managers.
- Excellent verbal and written English and valid passport.

If you fit our bill, contact [mario@terrapartners.com](mailto:mario@terrapartners.com) with a detailed cover letter by 30th September, 2008 explaining why you are the person we seek and enclose your resume.

About us: The Fund is 5 years old with 2years history investing in Bangladesh. The principals have had a prior fund since 1991 and have substantial experience in investing in transition economies. Our main office is in Prague, we have other offices in New York, Bucharest, Belgrade and Harare. This will be a satellite office, using facilities from Prague. We expect to grow this fund continuously and will invest in both the capital market and in private equity (especially providing capital to already listed companies through capital increases).