

## 39 more rebels killed in Lankan fighting

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka troops backed by fighter jets have moved deeper into Tamil Tiger territory in the island's north, killing 39 rebels, the defence ministry said yesterday.

The military lost two soldiers during heavy clashes Thursday across several northern fronts, a ministry statement said.

The air force said fighter jets carried out three bombing missions Friday over the Tiger-controlled Kilinochchi area, attacking a communication centre and what it described as a training camp for suicide bombers.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said the bombs fell on a civilian settlement, killing two women and injuring seven others.

Sri Lanka's agriculture minister,

Malithirala Sirisena, escaped an assassination attempt Thursday when a female suicide bomber attacked his convoy, killing two people and injuring six others.

The minister was not hurt, but the vehicle carrying his secretary was damaged in the attack and the deputy agriculture minister, Siripala Gamlath, was among those injured.

Sri Lankan troops are hoping to take control of Kilinochchi, which has been the rebels' administrative centre for the past decade.

Sri Lanka pulled out of a six-year Norwegian-brokered truce in January, since when the military says 7,366 rebels and 727 soldiers have been killed.

## Road accident

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The injured were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

In the capital, at least 30 people were injured in a bus collision on Cantonment staff road in the city yesterday morning, according to our staff correspondent.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at around 8:00am when a Dhaka-bound bus from Gazipur collided head-on with a Gazipur-bound bus on the road, leaving 30 passengers of both the vehicles injured.

The Dhaka-bound bus, Gazipur Paribahon, overturned while the Gazipur-bound bus, Ajmeeri Paribahon, caught fire after collision. Locals rushed the injured to different hospitals and clinics and put out the bus fire.

Of the injured, eight were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), five to Combined Military Hospital (CMH), three to Orthopaedic (Pongu) Hospital and one was admitted to Apollo Hospital.

The remaining 13 are undergoing treatment at different clinics.

Traffic on the road remained halted for over an hour. Cantonment police seized the buses.

## Ctg port

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job. But the government cancelled the previous tender due to the cancellation of its agreement with Cotecna on charges of irregularities.

The NBR said the certificate of Cotecna was cancelled for violation of the Pre-Shipments Inspection Rules 2002.

After scrapping the previous tender, NBR wanted to re-tender the installation of four container-scanners and thus sought permission from the ADB. But the ADB refused to do so.

Later, the NBR prepared a summary of the project and sent it to the higher authorities, suggesting that the project could be implemented from domestic resources.

Another PSI company, SGS Bangladesh won the tender of the container scanner installation as the lowest bidder.

The NBR had moved years ago to upgrade the container-handling facilities in the country's prime seaport that handles more than 80 percent of the imports and exports.

The BNP-led government initiated the scheme in 2003 after security agencies seized a huge quantity of arms and ammunition from the port area.

## Blast kills 32

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The army says more than 1,000 rebel fighters have been killed since it launched an offensive in Bajaur in early August, including al-Qaeda's operational commander in the region, Egyptian Abu Saeed Al-Masri.

Pakistan's government has tried to enlist fiercely independent ethnic Pashtun tribesmen to back its military operations against Taliban and al-Qaeda extremists based near the Afghan frontier.

Taliban militants have killed dozens of tribal elders they accuse of backing the government in recent years using roadside bombs, executions and, less frequently, suicide bombings.

Pakistan's tribal zone has been wracked by violence since thousands of Taliban and al-Qaeda rebels sneaked into the country after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001.

Most of their attacks have however targeted security forces. In September, Taliban militants beheaded two police recruits one week after abducting 25 of them from Orakzai.

The United States has become increasingly concerned at Pakistan's failure to act against Taliban militants based in the lawless tribal belt and in the adjoining North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

In the latest of a series of strikes inside Pakistan, a US missile attack on Thursday targeted a high-level meeting of al-Qaeda and Taliban commanders in the area.

The two missiles hit the house of Pakistani Taliban leader Hafiz Sahar Gul in North Waziristan district, killing nine people including six Arab militants, officials said.

The prime targets of the attack had left the property minutes before the strike, they said.

The incident in the lawless district, a known haunt of Taliban and al-Qaeda militants, comes after a string of US attacks on Pakistani soil that have raised tensions between Islamabad and Washington.

## Aman, Boro

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yielding varieties, threshing manually using a drum or wood block and a wide threshing mat, and maintaining appropriate harvesting time.

According to a report of the World Food Programme, if farmers harvest one week before the paddy gets mature, production might be 0.37 percent less than the estimation while it is likely to be 3.63 percent less if harvested one week after the paddy gets mature. The loss may be 0.45 percent if harvested even on the date the crops get mature.

## Party reforms

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Election Commission following the amended Representation of People Order (RPO), hinted party leaders. "Some changes might come to the party constitution but the decision will be taken only after the dialogue with the caretaker government on October 15," a senior leader of the party told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the party leaders, the proposals include provisions for electing the secretary general, a senior vice-president, and at least a half of the members of standing committee.

They however said although the proposals say that the chairperson will be elected by the party council for no more than two five-year terms, the party leaders are not that eager now to bring the provision into the party constitution as 'the situation has changed'.

Councils of the party and its front organisations must be held within six months of parliamentary elections, the leaders quoted from the reform proposals.

They also said if the new electoral law continues to bar having front organisations then the party will take 'necessary decisions' in light of the law.

Bhuiyan, who was expelled from the party by the chairperson on the eve of her arrest, had announced his party reform proposals on June 25 last year, garnering support from over 100 former lawmakers of the party.

The price of crude oil has now slumped by 47 percent since striking record high points above 147 dollars per barrel on July 11.

Meanwhile, global stock markets suffered another vicious sell-off on Friday, as the ongoing financial crisis showed no signs of easing up, dealers said.

"Crude prices continued to tumble as fear over the uncertain outlook for energy demand continues to be the dominating factor," said Sueden analyst Nimit Khmar.

"Markets are very much trading on fear, which has overwhelmed the fundamentals" of supply and demand, he added.

The 12-nation Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced Thursday that it would hold an emergency meeting in Vienna on November 18 to discuss the effects of the international financial crisis.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said on Friday that a cut in output reportedly being discussed by producing nations would be "wrong for the world economy".

"I'm concerned when I hear that the OPEC countries are meeting, or about to meet, to discuss cutting production, in other words making the price potentially higher than it should be," he said.

It would be "wrong for the world economy... for OPEC to cut production and therefore keep prices high," he added.

The cartel's next regular meeting was scheduled for December 17

## Karnal criticises

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face defeat, they must succeed," the veteran jurist-politician said.

However, on a note of optimism, he expressed hope about a new beginning in national politics on a clean sheet following the painstaking period during interim period.

He noted that the interim regime has enjoyed the support of the people for the last 20 months, "but now they seem desperate to give up. It looks like a stage-managed performance in the name of an election, this is not acceptable."

"Right now, in the face of pressure and threat, the Election Commission is softening its stance on party registration and other matters saying they are compromising this in the interest of the elections," he said.

One must join the race within the existing laws and regulations, he emphatically said in support of the sweeping changes being carried out since the January 11, 2007.

The eminent lawyer, known for his hard stance on clean politics, questioned the granting of over 200 bails to the accused in corruption cases at one go before the vacation bench of the High Court.

"I've never seen such a thing my 50 years of legal profession," he said, adding that the caretaker government and judiciary have the responsibility to inquire into how this happened.

Dr Karnal also said that the legal procedure of granting bails should not be abused.

He was critical of the projection of corrupt persons as politicians and demands for their release as 'political prisoners'. He demanded publication of the inquiry reports, charge sheets, trial proceedings and court verdicts against those convicted in corruption cases so these people later cannot claim to be innocent.

Naming some BNP and Awami League leaders and former MPs already convicted of corruption, Dr Karnal questioned if they are political prisoners at all.

"These people are telling lies, they are deceiving the nation," he said.

Asked if the caretaker government has failed in its anti-corruption drive, he said the government achieved some success in its mission as some have already been convicted while trial proceedings continue against some others.

Criticising the two main political parties for their frequent threats that they will not participate the elections unless their demands are met, he cited rules of international games like Olympics and questioned whether a player taking steroids would be allowed in the games if proved to be using drugs.

He said in such cases, the organisers seize the medals back from such players and even disqualify them for a life term from future competitions.

Dr Karnal observed that parties

demanding the release of corrupt politicians are basically deceiving the nation. "I will continue to fight against this. I will call a spade a spade. A big lie is being foisted on another big lie. We cannot remain as slaves in an independent Bangladesh," the veteran politician said in an emotion-charged voice.

Asked if he and his party will participate in the elections, Dr Karnal said Gano Forum would sit on October 17 to review the situation and take a decision.

"We have been fighting for free and fair elections for the last three years. We've spelt out a 23-point charter of demands and mobilised people's support towards it," he pointed out.

He said the caretaker government and the election commission cannot deprive the people of a fair election. The laws, which were amended for fair elections, must be applied without any other considerations.

Asked whether the planned December 18 elections would be any different from the past, he said, "The next few weeks will show."

Asked if his party will join any alliance, Dr Karnal said they would join alliance with like-minded parties like the Awami League-led 14-party combine and Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury's Bikalpa Dhara.

However Dr Karnal said that he opposes jumping on the bandwagon of the mega-alliance.

## 10pc cut

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increased fuel prices on July 1 this year when the price of crude oil was around 141 dollars and of refined oil 180 dollars per barrel in the international market.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation Chairman M Anwarul Karim said there is a decision in principle to cut fuel prices and still to give subsidy, but it will take at least 15 to 20 days to implement the reduced rate.

"This is because if I order for purchase of fuel from international market today, it takes no less than 20 to 25 days to get it here," he told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Regulatory Reforms Commission Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan said it is not the responsibility of the government to revise the prices of fuel.

"As per the act, Energy Regulatory Commission is the authorized entity to fix prices of fuels. Let the Commission take the decision -- either to cut prices or to increase it. As a result, the government can not be blamed," he told The Daily Star.

Dr Ali, also former finance adviser to the previous caretaker government, said when Energy Regulatory Commission fixes the prices, people have chances to suggest or to ask reasons for price hike or cut, which is not possible in the case when the government takes decision.

## AL debates

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The draft prepared by AL advisory council member HT Imam and AL information and research secretary Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin also suggested that the associated organisations work independently.

The ALCWC meeting will be held at party chief Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi with acting party President Zillur Rahman in the chair.

On Thursday, AL acting President Zillur Rahman firmly said the associated organisations must stay with the party. But acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam had earlier said the party must not have such bodies. Their conflicting views created confusion.

Talking to The Daily Star HT Imam, a former cabinet secretary, said the draft prepared by them recommends making the associated organisations independent. In reply to a question, he said they wanted dropping their names from the party constitution.

"But obviously there must be associated organisations, which will work independently in line with provisions of the new electoral laws," he said.

The party's 1986 constitution when there was only one associated organisation -- Bangladesh Awami Mohila League.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda said on Wednesday that political parties do not need to completely sever ties with all front or associated organisations but they have to sever links with students, teachers and labourers bodies in party constitution to meet the registration criteria.

The ALCWC meet will also take up issues like party registration, organisational situation, election strategy, manifesto, polls preparation and campaign, nomination process, formation of grand electoral alliance, and permanent release of Sheikh Hasina.

The meeting might take decisions like 33 percent quota for women at all levels of the party and nominations on the basis of recommendations from the grassroots level, party sources said.

Sources said decisions to be taken at the meeting would be finalised after consultation with the AL chief now in London to see her sister Sheikh Rehana. Hasina has already talked to some senior leaders including Zillur and Syed Ashrafur Islam, party insiders said.

## AL, 11-party

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"Gono Forum, Workers Party and other components of the 11-party will not accept Ershad-led JP and Islamist parties in any alliance. We formed 14-party coalition on the basis of a 23-point charter. According to this charter, Ershad and any Islamist parties cannot be allowed to join 14-party coalition," Pankaj Bhattacharya, president member of Gono Forum, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

"Actually, 14-party coalition is now inactive. And Awami League had taken many initiatives violating the 23-point and without consulting 11-party. In the past, AL had formed grand alliance with Ershad and signed a five-point accord with Khelafat Majlis," Pankaj added.

Zakir Hossain, coordinator of 11-party, said, "We will decide our stance -- whether to leave 14-party or not -- when AL will go for a grand alliance with Ershad."

In the last parliamentary election, 11-party fielded 172 candidates but none of them won. They bagged only 0.24 percent vote.

In recent developments, the AL expressed reservations about Dr Kamal Hossain's political role. It invited leaders of 14-party components, except Dr kamal Hossain, to an iftar party.

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## Hasina: Emergency

FROM PAGE 1

political parties are not being able to carry out their political activities, which she said, will hamper the process of parties' registration with the Election Commission (EC).

Hasina, who is now on parole and is expected to return home by the end of this month, said the parliamentary poll should be held on schedule.

"Bangladeshi citizens at home and abroad should work to that end," she added and also sought assistance from the international community in that regard.

The AL chief alleged that Bangladesh has been held hostage by an 'invisible agent' since January 11, 2007. "The country can't run on suggestions of an agent," she quipped.

Condemning the government's anti-graft drive, she said the drive against corruption virtually became a drive against politicians, an effort that already proved to be futile.

After the seminar, Hasina also answered various questions from journalists for the first time since she had been released from detention on a government executive order on June 11.

She however avoided a question about the much talked about expected dialogue between her and

her traditional political archrival BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia.

Leader of the British parliamentary human rights group, Lord Eric Avebury, in collaboration with International Bangladesh Foundation organised the seminar attended by leaders of the London units of BNP and AL.

Attending the seminar, members of the British parliament expressed concerns over the human rights situation in Bangladesh. They emphasised on good governance and accountability in government administration for improving the situation.

Hasina's special assistant also AL's Foreign and Environment Secretary Dr Hasan Mahmud, the party's London unit President Shamsuddin Khan, the unit's General Secretary Professor Abul Hashem and Senior Vice-president Councillor Mostafa Qureshi, AL's Canada unit President Sorwar Hossain, and BNP's British unit President Kamar Uddin also attended the seminar.

Kamar Uddin also demanded withdrawal of the emergency and urged the international community not to send election observers if the poll is held amid the emergency. He also said the 'minus two formula' should be left in the hands of the people.

## Singapore economy

FROM PAGE 1

On a seasonally adjusted quarter-on-quarter annualised basis, real GDP declined by 6.3 percent in the third quarter after contracting 5.7 percent in the previous quarter, the ministry said.

While it did not describe the economy as being in recession, a technical recession is generally defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction in economic output.

Economists polled by Dow Jones Newswires had forecast a 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter rise in GDP, the value of goods and services produced in the economy.

Compared with the third quarter of last year, the ministry said Singapore's economy contracted by 0.5 percent in real terms, against 0.8 percent expansion foreseen in the Dow Jones poll.

In August the government had revised down its full-year GDP forecast to 4.0-5.0 percent but since then, external economic conditions have deteriorated more than expected and some sectors of the economy have weakened significantly because of industry-specific or domestic factors, the ministry said.

"Singapore's export-oriented sectors, such as manufacturing, will be affected," it added.

Analysts said the key drag on third-quarter growth was manufacturing, and the surprise was a sharp decline in growth of what has been a booming construction sector.

Trade ministry data estimated that manufacturing contracted by 11.5 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, more than the 4.9 percent drop in the previous quarter.

Construction growth slowed to 7.8 percent from 19.8 percent, and service industries grew by 6.1 percent, marginally down from 7.0 percent in the second quarter, the data showed.

"Services deceleration should get

more severe from here on," the US bank Morgan Stanley said in a report.

Last year the economy expanded 7.7 percent but after years of growth, signs of a slowdown emerged with recent disappointing trade data and contractions in the manufacturing sector, which includes the export-dependent electronic and pharmaceutical industries.

Morgan Stanley said things will likely only get worse for Singapore.

With external conditions deteriorating and the lack of domestic demand support, Morgan Stanley forecast virtually zero growth of 0.2 percent year-on-year for 2009.

## Kazirhat-Paturia

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correspondent yesterday over telephone.

The ferry 'Barkat' returned from Kazirhat Ghat loading just 5 trucks yesterday, he added.

Join secretary of the ministry of water resources Md. Nurul Haque, Director (commerce) of BIWTC Mohammed Ali and General Manager (Commerce) of BIWTC Md. Mosharraf Hossain were present during the inauguration of ferry service at Paturia-Kazirhat.

Speakers at the inaugural ceremony said that Paturia-Kazirhat ferry service will not only reduce the transport cost of trucks it will also ease the pressure of Jamuna Bridge.

Paturia-Kazirhat ferry service will bring the northern districts and the capital closer, they added.

Kazirhat-Paturia ferry service came to a halt on July 30, 2007 due to the flood. Later, the service was restored on December 28, 2007. Then again the service was closed on December 29, 2007. The ferry service went into operation again on May 01, 2008 but went out of service the very next day, BIWTC source said.

## Nobel Peace Prize

FROM PAGE 1

"These efforts have contributed to a more peaceful world and to 'fraternity between nations' in Alfred Nobel's spirit," committee head Ole Danbolt Mjoes said.

Ahtisaari, a quiet, portly man now afflicted by rheumatism, told Norwegian broadcaster NRK that his work as the UN special envoy to Namibia had been the highlight of his career.

"Of course Namibia is the most important since it took so long," he said, adding that he was "very pleased" to win the prestigious prize.

As the UN secretary general's special envoy, Ahtisaari guided Namibia towards a peaceful independence in 1990 after more than a decade of negotiations.

He also oversaw the 2005 reconciliation between the Indonesian government and Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels, ending a three-decade conflict that killed some 15,000 people.

In Europe, he helped Kosovo, which declared its independence in February, even though his mediation efforts failed to clinch an agreement between Serbia and Kosovo.

And in May 2000 the British government appointed Ahtisaari to co-head, with Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, the inspection of IRA arms' dumps in Northern Ireland.

"Throughout all his adult life, whether as a senior Finnish public servant and president or in an international capacity, often connected to the United Nations, Ahtisaari has worked for peace and reconciliation," Mjoes said.

Although he most recently displayed his talents as a mediator in Europe, Ahtisaari cut his diplomatic teeth in Africa. He was appointed Finland's ambassador to Tanzania in 1973, at the age of 36.

He became UN Commissioner for Namibia in 1977 and in 1978 was named the UN envoy to Namibia.

In 1994 Finland's Social Democratic Party nominated him to run for the presidency and Ahtisaari became the first directly elected Finnish president.

Made fun of by the press for his large size and his limp, Ahtisaari was ill at ease with the largely ceremonial role of president. With his true passion in foreign affairs, Ahtisaari likened his tour in domestic politics, which lasted until 2000, to "an extramarital affair".

At the end of 2005, Ahtisaari was appointed the UN special envoy for talks on Kosovo, seven years after he played a key role in bringing an end to hostilities in the Serbian province.

He recommended independence for the breakaway Serbian province, where there is an ethnic Albanian majority, but his inability to get the two sides to agree was a blow for him.

With its decision to hand the 2008 prize to Ahtisaari, the Nobel committee has returned to a more tradition interpretation of the award, after several recent prizes expanded its boundaries to take in environmental work, for instance.

Last year's Peace Prize went to former US vice president Al Gore and the United Nations panel on climate change.