



Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani (R) welcomes his British counterpart Gordon Brown upon his arrival at the prime minister's house in Islamabad yesterday. Brown pledged to help Pakistan tackle terrorism on its soil after meeting President Asif Ali Zardari to discuss security in the wake of the Mumbai attacks.

### Taliban militants kidnap 7 in Afghanistan

AFP, Ghazni

Armed Taliban militants kidnapped six musicians and an election worker in eastern Afghanistan, one of whom was later found dead, a local official said yesterday.

The body of one musician was found Sunday, one day after the group was kidnapped in Paktika province, provincial spokesman Hameedullah Jowak told AFP.

"One of the six musicians abducted yesterday by Taliban was found dead today in the district. We have no information on the fate of the other five," he said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility, saying the hostages had flouted a ban on music, but denied killing the victim.

man for the Indian Air Force, told AFP.

The row broke out as British leader Gordon Brown, who is visiting Pakistan, held talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on regional security after the assault on Mumbai.

Relations between India and Pakistan have deteriorated in the wake of the devastating siege on India's financial capital, which New Delhi has blamed on "terrorists" in Pakistan.

Pakistan's air force said Indian jets had Saturday flown over the Pakistani-administered part of Kashmir and the eastern city of Lahore, both places where the militant group India blames over the

attacks is active.

The government said it had confirmed the incident with India.

"We contacted the Indian air force and they said the violation was inadvertent. We don't want to escalate the situation," Information Minister Sherry Rehman said.

A total of 172 people died when gunmen ran riot in India's financial capital last month, leading to a 60-hour siege in which hundreds of others of terrified locals and tourists were caught up.

India this week called Pakistan the "epicentre" of terrorism and demanded it do more to crack down on militant groups on its soil, but ruled out military action.

# Pakistan accuses India of violating its airspace

Brown seeks to defuse Indo-Pak tension

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan accused India's air force of violating its airspace, drawing a swift denial from New Delhi, as Britain's visiting prime minister sought to defuse tensions yesterday.

Pakistan's statement that Indian jets made an "inadvertent" intrusion threatened to further harm ties between the nuclear-armed South Asian states, whose relations have plummeted in the wake of the Mumbai attacks.

"There has not been any airspace violation as has been alleged," Wing Commander Mahesh Upasani, spokesman for the Indian Air Force, told AFP.

## Pakistan ties depend on militant crackdown

Says Indian PM

AFP, AP, Khundroo

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday that relations with Pakistan could only be normalised when it no longer provided safe havens for militant groups.

Singh, speaking at an election rally in disputed Kashmir, stressed India was open to better ties with Pakistan but that improvements depended on Pakistan taking action against groups such as those behind the Mumbai attacks.

"Our desire to normalise relations with our neighbour will not get fulfilled until our neighbour prevents its land from being used for terrorist activities against India," he said.

"There are some people in Pakistan who are always ready to carry out such attacks against our country."

Singh was speaking in Indian Kashmir, where ongoing state elections are being boycotted by

separatist politicians and rebels who argue that voting strengthens New Delhi's hold over the Muslim-majority region.

Singh travelled to Khundroo town in Kashmir after a breakfast meeting with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed the attacks on Mumbai, which have been blamed on a Pakistani-based Kashmiri militant group, Lashkar-e-Taiba.

India has called on Pakistan to crack down on militant groups operating out of Pakistan.

Pakistan has carried out raids on a charity believed to be linked to Lashkar, but also urged India to provide further evidence.

India finds itself in the awkward position of having to investigate terrorist attacks hand-in-hand with its long-time nemesis. The two countries have fought three wars against each other since independence. Despite a peace process that began in 2004, tensions remain high.

The overarching conclu-

## Iraq's reconstruction a \$100-billion failure

AFP, Washington

An unpublished US government report says US-led efforts to rebuild Iraq were crippled by bureaucratic turf wars, violence and ignorance of the basic elements of Iraqi society, resulting in a 100-billion-dollar failure. The New York Times reported on its website late Saturday.

The newspaper said it had gotten hold of a copy of the 513-page federal history of the

reconstruction effort that is circulating in Washington in draft form among a tight circle of technical reviewers, policy experts and senior officials.

The document has former secretary of state Colin Powell complaining that after the 2003 invasion, the Defence Department "kept inventing numbers of Iraqi security forces -- the number would jump 20,000 a week! We now have 80,000, we now have 100,000, we now have 120,000."

The overarching conclu-

sions of the history is that the US government has in place neither the policies nor the organisational structure that would be needed to undertake the largest reconstruction programme after the Marshall Plan, the report said.

All in all, the document concludes that the rebuilding effort never did much more than restore what was destroyed during the invasion and the pervasive looting that followed. The Times pointed out.

## Iran shuns Paris meeting of Afghan neighbours, allies

AFP, Paris

Iran failed to send its envoy to a major conference in Paris yesterday aimed at persuading Afghanistan's neighbours to play a greater role in restoring stability in the war-torn state.

French officials said delegates would urge the states around Afghanistan, in particular Iran and Pakistan, to play a more positive role in supporting Kabul's attempts to regain control over its territory.

Tehran had promised to send its Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, according to French officials, but in

the end he failed to make the trip and the Iranian ambassador also failed to show up, a diplomatic source said.

French-Iranian relations were strained this week after the foreign ministry in Tehran summoned the French ambassador to protest remarks by President Nicolas Sarkozy condemning Iran's threats against Israel.

The one-day Paris conference brought together top envoys from Afghanistan, its neighbours and the world's great powers to discuss ways out of the beleaguered country's seemingly endless state of war.

## No move to declare Pakistan a terrorist state, says US

THE DAWN, Washington

The US State Department has said that neither the United States nor the United Nations have ever considered declaring Pakistan a terrorist state.

"At a Friday afternoon briefing, spokesman Sean McCormack noted that Pakistan had banned Jamaatud Dawa because it felt

it was in its interest to do so and not because it felt that the United States was about to declare it a terrorist state.

"The Pakistani defence minister has said that Pakistan had to ban the Jamaat because if that hadn't happened it would have been branded a terrorist state. Is that the message the US has sent out?" McCormack was asked.

## BNP's polls manifesto

FROM PAGE 1

The manifesto's proposals for industrialisation are again vague, but there are some specific promises too. Establishment of an export park is certainly a good idea and promises of soft loan for SMEs is just what the sector needs.

But the hiccup comes again when one finds promises of collateral free loans for university graduates against their certificates. If one may remind, a similar project was launched by military dictator General HM Ershad when he was in power, which later turned out to be a big hoax as his party functionaries gobbled up the fund from Sonali Bank.

The BNP feels the need for helping the garment sector and for perking up the stock market, but again the manifesto stops short of specific action plans, while making some blanket promises to net in foreign direct investment.

It is heartening however to see the manifesto proposing formation of an advisory committee to tackle the impacts of global economic crisis, but specific action plans are missing again.

On the agricultural front, many promises have been made, again without spelling out the means for realising those. How new agricultural inventions will be disseminated among farmers, how agricultural production will be raised or how seeds and fertilizers will be supplied are all questions hanging in the air.

But good to know that there is a plan to set up warehouses and cold storages for preserving produce. But is that not a job of the private sector? Are we again talking about the state getting engaged in business?

Inexplicable are the proposals in the manifesto for encouraging farmers to grow region specific crops and to go for multi-cropping, and also for providing higher technology to poultry, fisheries and the cattle rearing sector. Our farmers are already practicing localisation of crops -- potato is cultivated in Munishganj and not in Barisal, wheat in Rajshahi not in Chittagong.

Then what is the catch here that the manifesto is talking about? Are our poultry and fisheries not two of the most productive?

The BNP exhibits modern thinking when it proposes setting up a high-tech city for development of information technology. India, the US and many other countries developed this way and there is no reason why Bangladesh cannot. However, it leaves much to be desired in telecommunications and the spread of internet, while the document

only mentions briefly that those will be improved. Improvement is an ongoing process and does not need mentioning.

Oxymoron is the proposal for sending nurses to the Middle East and Britain while Bangladesh itself is facing an acute shortage of medical assistants. A few big hospitals recently went to Kerala to recruit nurses and came back empty-handed.

The manifesto talks a lot about infrastructure which is good for perking up the economy. But again many of those such as the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, and flyover and monorail projects are all legacies of the past BNP-led government, which were not achieved during the party's five years in power. We can only hope that the party has now become more sincere about keeping its promises.

The manifesto touches upon the quintessential power and energy sector, but again without being specific. Instead of apologising to the public for BNP's failure in the energy sector, the manifesto claims that due to massive development in the industrial and agricultural sectors during 2001-2006, the energy demand exceeded the supply capacity. Such a claim mocks the 2006 Kansat tragedy where several people were killed in police firings while they were demonstrating demanding power supply.

Overall, the manifesto does not provide the nation with any road map for resolving the ongoing energy crisis in the country. It makes general commitments about small power plants, renewables, and atomic energy, and talks about a transparent and effective power generation and distribution policy.

It proposes nothing original regarding new power projects, but promises to implement power projects 'approved by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan' passing the entire onus on external organisations.

The manifesto specifies only two power projects Bibiyana 450 megawatt (mw) and Sirajganj 450 mw contracts for which the party wants to award to successful bidders through re-tendering within 100 days of its ascension to power.

Firstly, the present care-

taker government has already completed preparations for both of those power projects, and the World Bank and other financiers are ready to finance them. It would not take much special initiative to complete the bidding process upon coming to power. Secondly, such a commitment stands as

a stark contrast to the fact that in 2004 the BNP-led alliance government cancelled a bid for Sirajganj 450 mw power project as it matured stage. The BNP also promises formation of a special committee within 100 days of its ascension to power, to frame a policy for optimal energy utilisation. The government formed by BNP would implement its recommendations regarding oil, gas and coal. But the promise raises questions about the party's move in 2002 to set up two expert committees -- one for gas utilisation and the other for gas resources assessment. The BNP-led past government did not follow any recommendation of the gas utilisation committee except that it did not export gas as per the US company Unocal's proposal. The gas utilisation committee had warned that the country will face a gas crisis from 2011 and that the government should initiate oil and gas exploration to find more gas reserves.

The party promises to make Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) 'more' effective. BERC was created in 2003. Till the dissolution of the immediate past BNP-led government in October 2006, BERC had no power. The present caretaker government however vested some critical issues like energy pricing on BERC making BNP's commitment of making it 'more effective' sound rather hollow.

## Somali president sacks PM

AFP, Baidoa

Somalia's president announced Sunday he was sacking the cabinet but the premier rejected the move as unlawful and an attempt to scupper ongoing peace efforts with the Islamist-led opposition.

"As of now, I have sacked the prime minister and his current government and I will nominate a new prime minister within days," President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed told reporters.

The government of Nur Hassan Hussein was unable to perform its duties and I am obliged to save the country," he added. But Hussein himself told AFP that the president alone did not have the power to sack him.

The president was speaking in his usual personal capacity, contrary to the rules and regulations, as he is not mandated to sack the prime minister of the transitional federal government," Nur Hassan Hussein said.

## War criminals in polls

FROM PAGE 1

the war criminals are brought to justice."

These are the words of the "Oath of the Martyred Intellectuals Day" made at Bakula at the Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University.

The oath was taken in the name of farmers, labours, poets, writers, song composers and revolutionary figures to build Bangladesh as a country free from exploitation, harassment and deprivation.

Noted intellectual Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury conducted the oath, while artist and Language Movement veteran Imdad Hossain, Prof Pias Karim, and Prof Asfar Hossain, among others, were present.

This was the scene as seen elsewhere at the Central Shaheed Minar and Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Rayer Bazar where sector commanders and city dwellers irrespective of age and religion vowed the same.

"We need not be frustrated as communalism still persists in our society. There cannot be any bigger flaw in a society like fundamentalism. But we have history to have our demands met through struggle and we will press home our present demand through the struggle again," said Language Movement veteran Abdul Matin.

"This movement is to free our culture. This movement is to establish democracy and against capitalism. This movement is to free people and it will continue," said Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury.

The Sector Commanders' Forum in Rayer Bazar pledged once again to boycott the war criminals in the election and continue campaign against them in constituencies across the country.

"We fought the Liberation War and we are fighting now to bring the war criminals to justice. We will fight with the entire Bangladesh to press

home our demand," said Commander of Sector 4 Major Gen (retd) CR Dutta.

"We will request the people not to let any war criminals go to parliament as we have got our parliament in exchange of three million lives," said Sector Commander Major Gen (retd) KM Shafullah.

They also vowed to run a campaign against all the war criminals contesting the polls, especially against Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, supreme commander of Al Badr Bahini, Secretary General Al Habs Mohammad Mojahed, head of Al Badr in Dhaka, and alleged war criminals Delwar Hossain Sayeedi and Salihuddin Qader Chowdhury.

Different organisations placed floral wreaths at the memorial throughout the day.

Bikshubdha Deshbashi also brought out a flag procession from Central Shaheed Minar in the morning led by journalist Kamal Lohani urging people to boycott the war criminals in the election.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed paid tribute to the martyred intellectuals by placing wreaths at the martyred intellectual mausoleum in Mirpur.

President Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina also placed wreaths at the mausoleum, reports BSS.

Hundreds of mourners including freedom fighters, advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, political leaders, and high civil and military officials visited the mausoleum.

DUPROGRAMMES

Martyred Intellectuals' Day was observed at Dhaka University (DU) yesterday through different programmes.

Teachers, students and employees led by DU Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz arranged at the foot of Aparajey Bangla in the morning and brought out a silent procession, which paraded the cam-

pusserts.

Besides, mild mahfils were arranged at University central mosque and hall mosques after Zohr prayers for the eternal peace of the departed souls.

Special prayers were also arranged at other places of worship on the occasion.

They visited the mausoleums on the campus with the

## Greece calm after 8 days of riots

AP, Athens

Athens was calm Sunday after eight days of the worst riots Greece has seen in decades, sparked by the police killing of a teenager.

No demonstrations were planned for Sunday. In Athens, traffic returned to normal in the centre of town and an open-topped double-decker bus carried tourists round the city's main sights.