

# Afghanistan a UN priority: chief

AFP, KABUL

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon yesterday declared Afghanistan a priority for the United Nations and pledged to do the utmost to support key presidential elections this year.

Ban made a surprise visit to Kabul as the embattled country prepares for its second-ever presidential vote in August while facing an insurgency at its highest point since a US-led invasion ousted the Taliban regime in 2001.

"For the United Nations, Afghanistan will be a priority in 2009," Ban told reporters at a news conference with President Hamid Karzai.

"I am here to demonstrate and to convey my strong commitment and support for peace and stability, and development of Afghanistan's people," he said.

The August 20 elections would be a challenge, Ban said.

"But we will do our utmost to ensure that the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission, with the technical assistance from the United Nations, is adequately supported by donors," he said.

The United Nations has said security reached its lowest point in Afghanistan last year since the Taliban was removed from government with a spike in attacks, including on aid workers.

"The situation in Afghanistan is serious and it's getting worse," the UN's top relief official, John Holmes, said in Geneva on Tuesday.

The reasons were "escalating conflict and also because of the serious drought which has been raging there for two years in some parts of the country," he said.

The UN chief also called for international military and political efforts to be "balanced" in

## Let world know what Bangladesh

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"This is the same message I heard last year in west Africa; I heard it in north Thailand, in Greenland," she said.

That is why it is so important to have adaptation strategies and disseminate the knowledge that is already out there in a more coordinated way, she said, adding that the Bangladesh example of putting climate change in front of national development efforts gives her a strong reason for optimism.

"I promise you that what I learnt here will not stay here in my head. I will let the case of Bangladesh be known to the whole world so that we know why we have to act and why we have to act now," said Hedegaard.

"It would be possible to face the challenge together as part of the truly global deal if we have truly additional funding for this purposes," she added.

She said transferring technologies from developed countries to the least developed countries is absolutely crucial so that those who are having development and growths can do it with the best possible technologies instead of old ones in a common interest of all.

That is why the developed countries have to contribute

much more," she stressed.

Asked what she means by a "truly global deal", Hedegaard said the deal includes setting goals of short, mid and long terms and acting accordingly.

"It is easy to set a target but hard to take care of it. I think global leaders will come up with some targets that they would care for," she said.

She also said, "We should also take care of technology transfers, which should be a mechanism built in the deal."

Asked if she thinks the European Union's target for reducing emission by 20 percent by 2020 is fair enough, Hedegaard said the EU's targets is far from the most ambitious deal set by any region. The EU has also set to achieve 20 percent renewable energy by 2020.

Now we need the US to come up with specific suggestions," she observed. "I noticed that last Monday US President [Barack] Obama promised that the US would now show the international leadership in climate change negotiations. I think that is very crucial."

When asked about her opinion on whether Obama is really going to make it or not, she said the US president is approaching the issues around the negotiations, "she said.

## Borrowing from banks shoots up

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Finance ministry sources said the reason behind higher borrowing is that revenue income target could not be achieved. In the first six months, the NBR's (National Board of Revenue) revenue earning growth was only 13 per cent compared to 24 per cent during the corresponding period of last fiscal year.

In December last year, revenue collection fell by 14 per cent from that in December of the previous fiscal year. Moreover, while development expenditure in the first six month was not much, revenue expenditure was high due to subsidy and interest payment.

These contributed to the rise in government borrowing, the ministry sources said, adding they would try to ensure that borrowing target for the entire fiscal year is not exceeded.

In the given situation, the BB stressed increasing revenue

collection, caution in giving subsidy and initiative for raising foreign assistance.

The report also said it is assumed that the world economy would take the whole of 2009 or more to return to its normal shape.

Bangladesh economy is still free from the adverse impact of the global financial meltdown and loan crisis due to limited opening of the country's economy to short-term capital flow in the external sector.

It noted that there was cause for concern over export growth, remittance from expatriate Bangladeshis, foreign loan/grant (ODA) in government sector and FDI and portfolio investment.

The central bank said since the rate of exchange is volatile in the world market, the amount of profit to be given by the central bank to the government would be less.

The annual average inflation

rate, earlier estimated at 9.5 per cent, may come down to 8.5 per cent due to a fall in commodity prices in the global market and reduction of fertiliser and diesel prices.

Empowerment of women is also being pursued as a complementary strategy.

Debapriya also addressed.

A news release from Geneva said there was an overwhelming support for the recent transition to democracy and the ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional framework for promotion and protection of human rights.

Most delegations appreciated the efforts made by Bangladesh to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and improve the socio-economic situation of the people.

The Bangladeshi delegation at the session included, among others, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, Member of National Human Rights Commission Munira Khan and human rights activists and media personnel.

## VACANCY NOTICE

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces vacancy for Driver position for Disaster Response Facilities programme.

The duration of the Service Contract is twelve months initially, which is extendable upon satisfactory performance and availability of fund.

**Duties and Responsibilities:** The incumbent will drive the project vehicle within / outside Dhaka city to meet the transportation requirement of the project, day-to-day maintenance of the vehicle, maintain log book, arrange repairs where necessary, collect / deliver mail or documents when required

**Qualifications and Experiences:** The incumbent should have at least secondary education or equivalent level, with at least five years relevant experience. The incumbent must have a valid heavy / light vehicles driving license. Good knowledge of road network in Dhaka and surrounding areas and adequate knowledge and skills in vehicle maintenance and minor repair are essential. She / he must have working knowledge of communicative English, and must possess good manner. Experience of UN or government organizations would be an asset;

**Submission of Application:** Application should be marked 'Confidential' and the position applied for (i.e. Driver - DRF) should be clearly written on the A4 Size envelope. Application including curriculum vitae and a recent passport-size photograph should be sent to the HR Cluster, UNDP-Dhaka, GPO Box: 224, Dhaka-1000, or deposited at the Deposit Box at the IDB Bhaban (Ground Floor), Begum Rokeya Sharani, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207. For details of the Job Description and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Applications should be submitted no later than 17:00 pm, Saturday, 14 February 2009.

Submitted documents will not be returned to the applicants and only short-listed candidates will be contacted.



Bangladesh



PHOTO: AFP

This picture released by Sri Lanka's ministry of defence yesterday shows government soldiers outside a camp believed to be used to train Black Tiger suicide bombers found by advancing troops in the northeastern district of Mullaitivu. The ministry said troops on February 3, 2009 captured what was believed to be a training facility of Black Tiger suicide cadres.

## Talks a must in signing any treaty

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National Standing Committee.

Asked in which forum to discuss the issues, Delwar said, "It is the government's responsibility to choose that forum."

The meeting was going on at Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office with Khaleda in the chair at 10:30pm when the meeting was prepared.

Delwar said it seems that the government is busy fulfilling the desires of those who were behind cancelling the January 22 national election.

"It should be ensured that our garment sector gets quota-free access in the US market, but so far as I know the matter was not included in the Tifa [Trade and Investment Framework Agreement]. The

US has no Tifa accord with India," he said.

Delwar also said there is no need for international investigation into bribery and corruption because there are many laws here in the country to deal with these matters.

On the much-talked-about transit issue and curbing terrorism jointly, he said, "Both Richard Boucher [US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs] and Pranab Mukherjee [Indian external affairs minister] are visiting the country and we observe a haste. But the national interest must not be ignored."

The BNP secretary general once again demanded reinstatement of special security protection for party

Chairperson Khaleda Zia, "BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia is now getting less security support than Sheikh Hasina when she was the opposition leader."

Leaders of the BNP and its front organisation yesterday held a rally at Muktangan where they asked the government to ensure appropriate and full security for Khaleda immediately. They said they would launch a movement to press home their demand if the government fails to take any effective measures.

Delwar Hossain, BNP Vice-President Sarker Rahaman, joint secretaries-general Mirza Abbas and Selima Rahman, among others, addressed the rally.

## Illegal VoIP trade back

FROM PAGE 1

Along with many internet service providers, multinational mobile phone service operators were also caught red-handed while using the illegal technology.

BTTC recently awarded six licenses to the private sector to handle international voice and data traffic.

Among the six call handlers, three international gateways (IGW) are mainly responsible for handling international voice calls along with the state run Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTC).

Two other legal interconnection exchanges (ICX) transmit the calls between the IGWs and telecom operators, while the lone private international internet gateway (IIG) is responsible for handling data traffic.

The three new IGWs were handling 12 million minutes of calls a day while BTCL was handling 20 million, till December 2008.

But the numbers nosedived in January as illegal VoIP operators made the comeback.

"Around 40 percent of the calls are now being handled by the black marketers," claimed

The Bangladesh market is very lucrative for VoIP operators, as around 6 million Bangladeshis live abroad, and the number has been increasing by the year.

The issue of illegal VoIP business became very important to the government, as due to the use of the technology the government is losing a large amount of revenue.

Legal telecom operators also came forward to help BTTC and law enforcers in routing out illegal VoIP businesses, since they feel they have been getting a bad rap as VoIP based telecom services cannot operate without their collaboration.

Representatives of legal telecom operators yesterday at a meeting with the BTTC chairman made the commitment. BTTC also took a plan to strengthen its drive against VoIP businesses.

"If mobile phone service operators come forward to help, it will be easier to stop illegal VoIP businesses," said Manzurul Alam, the chairman of BTTC, assuring that the regulatory commission will continue to play its role, like it did through the two years of caretaker regime.

## Star-Aktel initiative

FROM PAGE 1

By The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam and Aktel Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Jefri A Tambi at a simple ceremony at the Spectra Convention Centre in the capital.

Under the three-year programme, three complimentary copies of The Daily Star will be distributed to around 1,000 schools each in 64 districts five days a week.

Every week, there will be a special page containing materials on English language useful for teachers and students in and outside the school. The teaching materials on this page will follow the books prescribed by the education ministry.

The page will also include ways to write to the editor, speaking and listening lessons, presentation and public speaking lessons and health and social awareness contents.

The schools -- two in each district headquarters and two in each upazila headquarters -- will be selected on performance basis. Half of these institutions will be girls' schools.

Different types of activities including competition on spelling, vocabulary, puzzle, general knowledge and book reading will also be arranged regularly to make learning English interesting.

The teachers will be requested to use relevant newspaper articles and pages at the classrooms.

Lauding the initiative and assuring all-out support,

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said, "This programme will greatly help the students in learning English."

The minister who spoke as the chief guest said the standard of English teaching in some schools is very high, but the picture is just the opposite in most other schools for lack of good teachers and teaching materials.

Stating that current enrolment at primary level is 90 percent but dropout rate is also very high, the minister said, "We'll take initiative to reduce dropout."

Nurul Islam Nahid suggests involvement of local educated people in the process for better results.

"The highest priority of Bangla as the language of our education system must be there. But at the same time we need to learn a strong second language, English, to compete in the world of globalisation," said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

Books are good for learning English, but they may not always be interesting to students, he said adding that newspapers could be interesting reading materials for having contemporary issues, cartoons, features and photographs. The sports section can specially attract the young readers, he added.

Mahfuz Anam said under the EIS programme, motivational conferences will be arranged for schoolteachers at divisional level besides competitions at national level.

"We hope to create new

inspiration for English language exercise among students," he said, adding the number of schools might be increased on the basis of one-year performance of the programme.

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## BNP still waits

FROM PAGE 1  
Chowdhury and MK Anwar met Speaker Abdul Hamid at the latter's parliament building office and demanded reinstatement of the Special Security Force (SSF) detail for BNP Chairperson also Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, who is a former prime minister as well.

They also discussed with the speaker the issue of seating rearrangement in the parliament.

"We will return to the House at once, if the speaker places a specific acceptable proposal regarding our demand for rearranging the seating," MK Anwar said.

He said they noticed in the media that the speaker said he will consider their demand, while the seating arrangement still remains unchanged.

"We don't want to boycott the parliament, we want to participate and play our role in the House," Anwar said.

The opposition has been demanding three more seats in the front row on the left side of the speaker's podium.

The immediate past speaker, Jamiruddin Sircar, had unilaterally allotted all 10 seats in the row to opposition lawmakers, including one for the lone Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker Oli Ahmed.

On the treasury bench's demand, new Speaker Hamid rearranged the seating allotting only four of the front row seats to the opposition lawmakers, including one for Oli Ahmed.

**SPEAKER'S VERSION**  
Talking to reporters in his office last evening the speaker said he again urged opposition lawmakers to return to the parliament assuming their of considering their demand.

"I am hopeful that I'll be able to do something regarding their demand, but I can't specifically say how much," Hamid said.