

'Clock ticking for Arafat'

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel will not immediately expel Yasser Arafat from his West Bank headquarters after a suicide attack in Haifa but the "clock is ticking" towards the Palestinian leader's removal, a senior official said yesterday.

"When the time comes he will be expelled. The clock is already ticking," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The Israeli security cabinet approved in principle Arafat's removal on September 11, two days after twin suicide attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, a decision which prompted outrage among Palestinians and international condemnation.

The official said that the international community, including Israel's arch ally the United States, had still not fully appreciated that Arafat was the main hurdle to peace in the region.

"The Americans and the Europeans do not understand yet that Yasser Arafat is an arch-terrorist and represents the principle obstacle to all negotiations ... but this will happen one day."

A group of peace activists have formed a human shield around Arafat's Ramallah headquarters in a bid to foil any move by the Israeli army.

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ADP cut down, yet execution stays low

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite heavy trimming of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the last fiscal (FY03), the government could implement only about 89 per cent of the funds.

At such a slow rate of implementation, the government did not have to borrow from the banks and rather retarded Tk 1,100 crore of its loans.

According to the latest planning ministry report, foreign aided projects suffered heavily. It will be placed at a meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

The original ADP size of FY03 was Tk 19,200 crore. When the donors led by International Monetary Fund (ADP) and the World Bank (WB) criticised the allocation as "unrealistic and ambitious" and asked the government to slash it substantially, the ADP was revised down to Tk 17,100 crore.

While trimming the ADP, the government faced stiff resistance from different ministers and lawmakers who wanted projects involving their ministries or constituencies untouched.

Sources quoting the draft report said out of the Tk 17,100 crore revised allocation, the government could utilise Tk 15,219 crore. Of this, 96 per cent of Tk 10,741 crore local resource component was spent. On the other hand, only 82 per cent of the Tk 6,359 crore foreign aid component was utilised.

"A good part of foreign loans could not be disbursed because of our failure to comply with donors' conditions," a high official of the planning ministry said. But, he pointed out, the utilisation rate of

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Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar inaugurates the 23rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Small Countries Conference at Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Listed criminal Jasim caught with AK-47 in Fatikchhari

12 accomplices, including 4 burqa clad women, also nabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Listed criminal Jasim Uddin along with 12 accomplices was arrested in Fatikchhari upazila yesterday and huge firearms including an AK-47 rifle and ammunition were recovered from their possession, local sources said.

Jasim is from Rangunia Police Station and he is an accused in 13 cases including three for murders committed in the last eight months.

He is also an aspirant for chairmanship of Islampur Union Parishad under Rangunia and this has posed a threat to other likely candidates, the sources pointed out.

Police intercepted a microbus carrying Jasim and his accomplices of whom four were women wearing 'burqa', at about noon and nabbed them. The microbus came from the city.

The arrestees were taken to Fatikchhari Police Station. Police later went out on a drive and recovered the arms and ammunition. However, police did not confirm the recovery and maintained mysterious silence about it. They only said the team conducting the drive did not return till 8:30 pm.

Explaining this, some sources said Fatikchhari police were under orders from Additional Superintendent of Police Chowdhury Monzoorul Kabir, who led the drive, not to disclose anything.

None of the local pressmen was allowed to enter the police station.

Tk 2cr medicine haul at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Contraband medicines worth about Tk 2 crore were seized from a Bangladesh Biman aircraft at Zia International Airport yesterday.

The medicines -- life saving and some stimulating the libido -- were found in five suitcases in a container kept in the aircraft that returned to Dhaka from Karachi, officials said.

Acting on a tip off, Customs and Excise Intelligence personnel searched and seized the suitcases.

Transit Desk sources said those were booked in the names of Kazi Nizam and Salehuddin for Karachi-Dhaka-Kathmandu flight. But none claimed ownership.

The medicines include Inj-Disteral 0.5mg, Tieuaus-500, Human Albumen, Detropin, Premolut-N and Methergin-Tab.

A departmental case was filed.

HSC results likely by Oct 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations are likely to be published between October 13 and 16, education ministry officials said.

Computer centres of the education boards will finalise the grade sheets by October 12.

"Board officials have sought an appointment with the prime minister

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 06		5-41 pm
Oct 07	5-52 am	

Prayer Timings		
October 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-25	4-40
Maghrib	5-48	5-53
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Blair 'knew Iraq threat limited'

BBC ONLINE

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair knew Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction ready for use within 45 minutes, former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has claimed.

He said that before the war started Blair privately admitted that Saddam Hussein had no weapons posing a "real and present danger".

Cook -- who resigned as Leader of the Commons in protest at the conflict -- makes his claims in a book based on his diaries, being serialised in the Sunday Times.

Downing Street has dismissed the allegations as "absurd".

Cook said it became clear that the prime minister did not consider Iraq's weapons an imminent threat when they spoke two weeks before war started.

He added that Blair had appeared prepared to go to war regardless of any progress made by UN weapons inspectors.

Cook's new book is based on diaries kept during the tense period in the run-up to the conflict.

In extracts published on Sunday, Cook also says the head of the Joint Intelligence Committee, John Scarlett, "assented" when he suggested Iraq had no WMD which could target large cities.

And he claims that a "large number of ministers" spoke up in cabinet against British involvement in the US-led military action.

It was the nearest thing to a "mutiny" he had seen since Blair took office, said Cook, who quit his cabinet post in March in protest at the prospect of military intervention.

A Downing Street spokesman said: "The idea that the prime minister ever said that Saddam Hussein didn't have weapons of mass destruction is absurd."

"His views have been consistent throughout, both publicly and privately, as his Cabinet colleagues know."

"Robin Cook's views are well known and have been expressed

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