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OIC leaders rally round Arafat

AFP, Putrajaya

Muslim leaders voiced support at the opening of their summit here for beleaguered Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, but Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said the Palestinians should stop suicide bombings because they lead nowhere.

Mahathir hinted in his speech at the Organisation of the Islamic

Conference (OIC) summit that the Palestinians should drop all violence against the Israelis and negotiate even if the terms are unfair.

The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, opened the summit by calling on the international community to provide protection for the Palestinians and a condemnation of Israel's decision to expel Arafat.

He repeated the standard OIC

line that Israel should pull out from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Syria's Golan Heights and territories claimed by Lebanon, for peace to be achieved.

Support for the Palestinian cause is a central tenet of the OIC, which was formed in 1969 after the burning of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said: "The persecution, which Israel

is practising against the Palestinian people... has naturally to invite a Palestinian reaction that took the form of resistance which is a legitimate act of self-defence safeguarded by the UN Charter."

Of the Muslim leaders who spoke in the opening session, only Mahathir deviated from the usual OIC line on the 50-year Arab-Israeli conflict.

"I am aware that all these ideas

will not be popular. Those who are angry would want to reject it out of hand. They would even want to silence anyone who makes or supports this line of action."

"They would want to send more young men and women to make the supreme sacrifice. But where will all these lead to? Certainly not victory. Over the past 50 years of fighting in Palestine we have not achieved any

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KL to talk with Dhaka before running for OIC post

BSS, Putrajaya

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said his country was thinking about fielding a candidate for the post of secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

"It is not a divisive issue. It will be discussed with Bangladesh and solved sincerely," Mahathir told reporters after a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Putrajaya Conference Centre in the afternoon.

The bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the OIC summit was

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PHOTO: AFP

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (centre) welcomes Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to the OIC summit yesterday, as his wife Siti Hasmah (left) looks on in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

War on terrorism a pretence for war against Islam: Mahathir

AFP, Putrajaya

Terming the West's use of the war on terrorism a pretence for a war against Islam, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told a major Islamic summit yesterday that Muslims were 'humiliated and oppressed' through it.

In a typically outspoken speech, Mahathir told the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit that Muslims could exploit what he termed the increasing arrogance of the Jewish people.

"The Europeans killed six million Jews out of 12 million. But today the Jews rule this world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them," said Mahathir, who is due to retire at

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PHOTO: STAR

Jahangirnagar University's women students occupy the entrance to the vice-chancellor's office, confining the VC, two pro-VCs and the treasurer to the JU administrative building for hours yesterday on the second day of a frenzied demonstration against a water crisis.

Angry women students besiege JU VC again

Teachers' indefinite strike cripples university

JU CORRESPONDENT

Women students of Jahangirnagar University once again confined the vice-chancellor, two pro-VCs and the treasurer to the JU administrative building for 10 hours yesterday on the second day of a frenzied demonstration against a water crisis.

The demonstration coincided with an indefinite strike by teachers, bringing the university's academic and administrative activities to a halt and prompting the authorities to postpone an emergency syndicate meeting, called to end the campus stalemate.

VC Prof Jasim Uddin Ahmad, pro-VCs Prof Imamuddin and Dr

Enamul Huq Khan and Treasurer Prof ABM Enayet Hossain were confined from 11:15am to 9:15pm, as the residents of Jahannara Imam, Pritilata and Nawab Faizunnessa halls pushed ahead with their protest.

"They (authorities) didn't take

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50 nurses hurt in police clubbing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday clubbed unemployed and diploma student nurses who were gathering to stage a sit-in at the Directorate of Nursing Services (DNS) office in Motijheel, leaving at least 50 of them injured.

Some 1,000 nurses from 38 government nursing institutes gathered in front of the DNS office housed in the Ispahani Building to stage the sit-in against a government move to appoint 177 nurses, who passed from private institutes, to public hospitals.

The government in a press note said that 2,000 nurses were appointed on merit and seniority and more appointments were underway, official news agency BSS reports.

The nurses grouped under Bangladesh Unemployed Diploma Nurses Association (BUDNA) and

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PHOTO: STAR

Riot police charge at demonstrating nurses behind the Bangladesh Bank office at Motijheel yesterday, (left), after driving them out of a sit-in at the Directorate of Nursing Services office. (Right) Nurses carry an injured colleague for treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

L/C margin on all food items waived

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The central bank yesterday withdrew the letter of credit (L/C) margin on import of all food items including onion, lentil, spice and date to control their prices during Ramadan.

But a 25 percent L/C margin on rice and wheat and 50 percent on sugar will remain as before to protect the interest of local producers.

"Withdrawing L/C margin in case of importing food items will reduce the import cost and will lower prices," a Bangladesh Bank official said.

The L/C margin for importing food items was 50 percent. With the withdrawal, banks now will be able to open L/Cs for importing the items on bank-client relations.

Earlier, a meeting on Wednesday, with Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury in the chair, recommended lowering the L/C margin to 25 percent from 50

percent. Opening L/Cs for importing consumer products in July-August of the current financial year went up

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Bashundhara Site Office: Plot # 12/D/E, Block-A, Bashundhara Residential Area, Dhaka
Phone: 8814061, 8818728, 9896895, Fax: 9886041
River View Site Office: Hasnabad, Keranigonj (Near Bangladesh China Friendship Bridge-Buriganga Bridge-I), Dhaka, Phone: 7419942, 7419943, 7419944, 7419945, 7419946

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