



PHOTO: STAR

BACK TO BUSINESS: Dhaka residents arrive in the city's Kamalapur Railway Station by train yesterday after spending the Eid holidays with loved ones back home in villages and towns.

Palestinian PM rules out instant talks with Sharon

REUTERS, Ramallah, West Bank

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie yesterday ruled out holding talks with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as long as Israel continues constructing a separation barrier in the West Bank. Qurie's comments appeared to rule out an immediate meeting with Sharon, which is seen as crucial to giving new momentum to a U.S.-backed road map to peace, stalled over an upsurge of Israeli-Palestinian violence. "If the Israeli government says it will continue building the wall regardless of what happens then there is no need for any meeting or talks to take place (with Sharon)," Qurie told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting in Ramallah. Qurie was speaking ahead of a trip to Jordan later on Saturday where he is due to hold his first meeting with U.S. Middle East envoy William Burns since taking office as Palestinian Authority prime minister earlier this month. Israel has said it is determined to

construct the barrier in order to prevent attacks by militants who have infiltrated into the Jewish state from West Bank cities and carried out more than 100 suicide bombings in a three-year-old Palestinian uprising. Palestinians said the barrier -- part razor-wire fence and part wall -- as a land grab to annex occupied land. The barrier has been widely condemned because it veers deep into occupied West Bank land where it encircles Jewish settlements. The barrier drew wrath from the United Nations on Friday, when Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued a report saying it could make "the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state more difficult." Israel responded to Annan's report by issuing a statement saying it would continue building the barrier "as long as there is no intense and effective effort by the Palestinian Authority to confront

Palestinian terror groups."

Aides to discuss Sharon-Qurie meeting
Despite his conditioning of any meeting with Sharon on a halt to construction of the barrier, Qurie said top Palestinian and Israeli officials would soon begin discussions about arranging a summit between the two prime ministers. Hassan Abu Libdeh, the director of Qurie's office, and Minister of Negotiation Affairs Saeb Erekat were scheduled to hold talks with the head of Sharon's office Dov Weisglass on Sunday to discuss a Sharon-Qurie meeting. No date has been set for a meeting with Sharon, Qurie said, adding the talks would not take place unless they were well prepared and he was assured of Israel's commitment to implementing the road map and reviving stalled peacemaking.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Teenage girl's murder in Banskali angers locals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The killing of a teenage girl on the night of the Eid-ul-Fitr at Baharchhara union in Banskali coastal upazila -- just eight days after the gruesome arson attack in which 11 members of a minority family were burnt to death -- has triggered fresh resentment among locals, sources said. Police said Rafeza Khanam alias Poppy, 17, daughter of Mohammed Elias, a lawyer and former chairman of Baharchhara Union Parishad, was stabbed to death by the domestic help and three others when she went to the toilet on the night of the Eid day. Police arrested domestic help Abdul Kader and another neighbour Nurul Amin in connection with the murder and said, during interrogation, Kader confessed his involvement. Police produced both before court yesterday where the statement of Kader was recorded under Section 164. They were then sent to jail custody. Investigation Officer (IO) Eof of the case Sub-inspector Sher Ali of Banskali Police Station said

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Man to die for killing wife for dowry

BSS, Manikganj

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife for dowry. Judge Muhammad Momin Ullah of the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Manikganj, delivered the verdict convicting Alam, 28, of killing his wife Ambia Khatun, 18, at Atipara village under Singair upazila of the district. According to the prosecution, Alam, son of Raisuddin of the village, burnt his wife by pouring petrol on her on November 5, 2001 as she refused to bring money in dowry from her parents. Ambia was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where she succumbed to her injuries the following day. Later, victim's father lodged a murder case with Singair Police Station accusing Alam.

Chinese People's Consultative Confce chief due today

UNB, Dhaka

Jia Tuingling, chairman of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference, arrives in Dhaka today on a three-day official visit. He will fly in here from the Maldives by a special aircraft in the afternoon. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar will receive him at Zia International Airport. During his stay here, the Chinese leader will call on President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will call on him at his Sonargaon Hotel suite. During his visit, officials said, two agreements will be signed with the External Resources Division (ERD) and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. On December 1, the Chinese dignitary will hold official talks with Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar at the Sangsad Bhavan. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will host two dinners in his honour. Jia Tuingling will also visit National Memorial at Savar to pay homage to the martyrs of the War of Independence. A delegation of Bangladesh-China Friendship Association headed by Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain will call on him. The Chinese leader will leave Dhaka for Kathmandu on December 2.

PM meets BJP, IOJ leaders to mend fences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an apparent bid to mend the fences with her coalition partners, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday held meetings with five key leaders of the BJP and IOJ at her office. Top echelons of coalition leader Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) took the meetings with minor partners Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and two factions of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) 'politically important'. The BNP efforts for a thaw in the apparently icy relations with the constituents of the four-party coalition come in the wake of the main opposition Awami League's move to fashion an alliance to add spark to the anti-government movement. The coalition also welds together the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

Both the BJP and IOJ leaders skipped several official programmes including iftars hosted by President Iajuddin Ahmed, the premier and senior ministers during Ramadan and the receptions hosted by them on the Eid-ul-Fitr day. "We skipped the official programmes in line with a decision of our party. We had held talks with the BJP leaders who also shared our sentiments as the government reneged on the commitment to form a four-party alliance government," said a top IOJ leader. A front-ranking BJP leader also took a swipe at the government for "flagrantly ignoring" two constituents of the alliance. Sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) termed the meetings

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

West Indies draw level

REUTERS, Harare

Blistering batting by Wavell Hinds and explosive bowling by Fidel Edwards led West Indies to a series-levelling (Duckworth/Lewis method) victory over Zimbabwe on Saturday. Hinds scored 127 and fast bowler Edwards took six for 23 as the tourists won the rain-affected fourth one-day international by 72 runs to square the five-match series at 2-2. The deciding game will be played at the same venue on Sunday. After being put into bat, West Indies scored 256 for three before rain ended their innings after 45 overs. Zimbabwe, set a target of 223 in 32 overs, reached 150 for seven, wicketkeeper Tatenda Taibu top-scoring with 66. Brief scores: West Indies 256-3 in 45 overs (Wavell Hinds 127 not out, Chris Gayle 51) and Zimbabwe 150-7 in 32 overs (Tatenda Taibu 66; Fidel Edwards 6-23).

5 get life, 7 10 yrs' RI for Dohar killings

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Five persons have been sentenced to life term and seven to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for killing two brothers in Dohar in May 1996. Those who have been awarded life term are Abdul Jalil, Mosharraf Hossain, Atiar, Motiar and Year Ali. Falu Khan, Mojibur, Shukur, Faruk, Hiron, Atal and Sona Miah were given 10 years' RI each. Of the convicts, Mosharraf, Mojibur and Motiar are brothers and they along with Falu Khan and Abdul Jalil were present in the court when the judge passed the sentence. The other convicts -- Atiar, Faruk, Shukur, Hiron, Year Ali, A t a l and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Tourist drowns in Bay

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A young tourist from Bangladesh Dhaka city was washed away by the low tide as he along with his three friends went to the Laboni Point of Cox's Bazar sea beach to have a bath yesterday morning. After 30 minutes, beach guards with the help of fishermen recovered the body of Ataur Rahman Sagar, 20. Sagar was awaiting admission to Dhaka University. His friends Iqbal, Sohaq and Deepun, also from Bangladesh, narrowly escaped. The young tourists came to Cox's Bazar on Thursday and were scheduled to leave for Dhaka at 11:00am yesterday.

3 killed, 40 hurt as bus, truck collide in Jessore

UNB, Jessore

Three people were killed and 40 others injured in a bus-truck collision near Sadhipur Kadomtala in Bagherpara Upazila on the Jessore-Magura Highway yesterday. Police said the accident occurred at about 10:00am when a Khulna-bound brick-laden truck collided with a Dhaka-bound bus from Khulna, killing three of the bus passengers on the spot and injuring 40 others. The dead are Safiuddin Molla, 72, Milon Hossain, 25, and Budho Mia, 35, of Piarpur village in Salikha Upazila of Magura district. The injured were admitted to Bagherpara Health Complex and hospitals in Magura and Jessore.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Traffic police in the Motijheel commercial heart in Dhaka stand relaxed on one of the busiest road that lie deserted of vehicles yesterday, as the city takes time to break out of the Eid holiday mood.

Lankan PM rejects power-sharing plan Peace process in doldrums again

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's beleaguered government yesterday rejected a power-sharing plan from a hostile president, continuing a political power struggle and casting new doubts over the peace process with Tamil rebels. Officials close to the premier said the compromise offered through media controlled by President Chandrika Kumaratunga was unacceptable as a way out of the stand-off that has undermined the peace process with Tamil Tiger rebels. "The offer of sharing defence ministry responsibilities was news to the prime minister," a source close to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said. "You cannot conduct cohabitation negotiations through the media." In a seven-page leaked document, the president agreed to share defence functions with the premier. The offer came after Tiger rebels warned Thursday that failure to resolve the ethnic conflict would force the guerrillas to secede. Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran warned that minority Tamils will invoke their right to self-determination if the political power struggle here scuttled the internationally acclaimed peace bid aimed at ending three decades of ethnic bloodshed that has claimed over 60,000 lives.

There was no immediate reaction from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to Kumaratunga's offer which also included broadening the current peace negotiating process to include a "peace advisory committee." The pro-rebel tamilnet.com website reported the president's offer without comment. Asian diplomats said the continuing squabbling between the president and prime minister augured ill for the peace process. Norway suspended its mediation role two weeks ago saying there was no clarity as to who was in charge in Colombo after Kumaratunga on November 4 sacked ministers of defence, interior and information in the worst clash with the premier. The prime minister, who is from a rival party, has also backed down from his role in the peace process saying he could no longer take responsibility for maintaining a truce with Tiger rebels, which has been in place since February last year, without control over the military. Official sources close to the president said she wanted the prime minister to name a minister of his choice to handle defence responsibilities that have a direct impact on the stalled peace process. Kumaratunga's spokesman

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Hillary wants wider int'l role in Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

Senator Hillary Clinton called Friday for a wider international role in running Iraq, but doubted the US administration would cede much control in the country it invaded and occupied. "I'm a big believer that we ought to internationalize this, but it will take a big change in our administration's thinking," Clinton, a Democrat from New York, said during a nearly 10-hour visit to Baghdad where she met with US troops, military chiefs and civilian officials including US administrator Paul Bremer. "I don't see that it's forthcoming," said the wife of former President Bill Clinton. Clinton, who has ruled out a 2004 presidential bid, arrived in Baghdad with Democrat Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island a day after President Bush's surprise Thanksgiving visit to US troops and Iraqi officials in the capital. Bush's trip was widely seen as a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Great apes in danger



PHOTO: AP

A gorilla sits in an undated picture. The UN agencies at a meeting in Paris on Friday said they urgently needed at least \$25 million to save the apes including gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans from fast extinction.

AP, Paris

Poachers shoot them. Smugglers sell their babies as exotic pets. Illegal loggers wipe out the rain forests where they live. And civil wars drive them away. The great apes -- gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans -- are in great danger, the United Nations said as its environment and cultural agencies ended a meeting Friday on how to protect the closest relative to humans in the animal world. The three-day talks in Paris drew representatives from 18 countries for what organisers said was the most wide-ranging meeting ever on endangered great apes. They worked out a global strategy to prevent poaching and illegal trade, while encouraging education and ecotourism. The agencies say they urgently need at least \$25 million for programs to save the apes from the threat of extinction. "We may need a much larger sum, certainly in the hundreds of millions, if we're going to guarantee saving these animals," said Robert Hepworth of the United Nations Environment Program.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7