

## World powers haggle

FROM PAGE 16 questions "can be resolved by Iran responding" to IAEA calls for a suspension of its nuclear fuelwork.

Russia is resisting the pivotal clause because it fears Tehran's failure to meet the demand would open the way to a Security Council escalation and possible sanctions, said a senior diplomat, who is close to the talks but asked not to be named.

According to the diplomat, the draft text shows a line crossing over the crucial clause. The diplomat said this had been done by the Russian representative to talks in Vienna in order to clear the way for a new wording.

The IAEA meeting was called after Iran this month resumed work on uranium enrichment, the process that makes fuel for nuclear reactors but can also become the raw material for bombs.

While Washington charges that Iran is seeking atomic weapons, Tehran insists its programme is peaceful.

The European trio, who are spearheading European Union talks with Iran, drew up the draft text, a senior diplomat close to the talks said.

Russia wants to change the key clause so that the IAEA board of governors just informs the Security Council about developments in Iran but "decides not to take any action," the senior diplomat said.

"The Russians object that if the Council is empowered to take any sort of action, that this will go further, an automatism that will set off a chain of reactions," said the diplomat.

The diplomat said that "if Iran does not do what the resolution tells them, then this could lead to sanctions, or even more," a reference to military action, under the UN Charter.

A second diplomat said the Russians want the crackdown on Iran to be a "two-step" process,

with the Security Council being informed of the matter. But any decision on calling for enforcement action would come after a pause for diplomacy until a regular IAEA board meeting on March 6.

Bush on Thursday gave public backing to the Russian compromise but said the United States is not easing efforts to refer Iran to the Security Council.

China and IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei have also backed the move.

The US State Department has expressed fears that Iran could be seeking to buy time through the Russian proposal.

"The Russians came up with the idea and I support it. And the reason why I think it makes sense is because I do believe people ought to be allowed to have civilian nuclear power," Bush told a White House press conference.

"However, I don't believe nontransparent regimes that threaten the security of the world should be allowed to gain the technologies necessary to make a weapon. And the Iranians have said, 'We want a weapon'. And it's not in the world's interests that they have a weapon."

Bush stressed that the United States want to end the crisis through diplomatic efforts. But it is also lobbying aggressively for a UN referral.

Diplomats said the United States as well as the European trio were pushing hard in Vienna to rally support on the IAEA board.

One diplomat said US officials were saying that "Iran is a direct threat to US national security and that the United States will not tolerate an Iranian nuclear weapons programme or enrichment capability because of the nature of the regime."

"The Americans made very clear that they want action at this board," a diplomat said.

## Six Bangladeshi smugglers arrested in West Tripura

ANI, Agartala (Tripura)

The Border Security Force (BSF) has arrested six Bangladeshi nationals, including a forest staffer, as they were allegedly trying to smuggle out tree logs from Indian territory into Bangladesh through the border village of Bachaibari in West Tripura District.

The six arrested have been identified as Bangladesh citizens belonging to the Damumara area under the Chunarughat Police Station in Bangladesh's Habiganj District.

"We've caught six Bangladeshi miscreants of which one is a Bangladeshi forest official. We've also got a Nokia mobile phone, we're looking at the numbers. Maybe he has contacts and is also involved in militant activities," said S.K. Soodh, Additional Deputy Inspector General of the Border Security Force.

Soodh informed that the smugglers were caught red-handed by the 37th battalion of the BSF as they were trying to ferry the logs of wood from Bachaibari.

The arrested persons, however, claimed that they had entered Indian territory by mistake while collecting firewood from the jungle.

"I am from Bangladesh and by mistake entered the Indian territory from where I was arrested. I possessed a mobile phone and a measuring tape and we are total of six," said Shafiq Mian, the arrested Bangladeshi forest official.

Local villagers informed that timber smuggling was one of the many problems confronting them. They claimed that armed Bangladeshi cattle lifters also visited the area to lift livestock.

The arrested persons are presently being interrogated.

## Rocca discusses JMB, other issues with Jamaat

UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca met Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Matiur Rahman Nizami at Jamaat central office yesterday and discussed issues of Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and next general elections.

"We've told her that the nation unitedly faced the JMB militants. They are not completely eliminated, but weakened," Jamaat leader Barrister Abdur Razzak told the news agency over telephone.

He said the religious leaders condemned the militancy and bomb terrorism by the JMB.

Rocca went to know about JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman and JMB chief Bangla Bhai and "We've said they must be caught, there is no reason that they will not be arrested," the Jamaat leader said.

On election issue, he said Jamaat believes that next general elections will be held free and fair under the caretaker government like the three previous elections.

About the opposition demand for reforms of the caretaker government system, Barrister Razzak said: "We've told her (Rocca) that it is not possible to find out a person acceptable to all as chief advisor as being pressed by Awami League, and such provision of acceptable person can not be included in the constitution. It would be an absurd proposition."

Jamaat, however, agreed to strengthen the Election Commission by enacting laws, he added.

The meeting, which lasted for 45 minutes, was attended, among others, by Jamaat leader Mohammad Qamaruzzaman and US Charge d'Affaires Judith Chammas.

## Too tender

FROM PAGE 1 The ill-fated boys were at the madrasa at the time of the accident.

They said they knew that their mother has died but did not seem to have realised what that means.

Apart from the mother, the two boys also lost their only three-year-old sister Ria and two maternal uncles Mohammad Selim, 35, and Mohammad Kalim, 22. The two uncles used to look after the whole family.

They boys are now in the custody of their grandmother with an uncertain life ahead.

## Tengratila

FROM PAGE 16 Asked if Niko plans to address the water crisis, its Country Manager Brian Adolph said, "We can try installing a deep tubewell and storing water in a tank for use by people of this area."

On the continued spewing of gas, he said this will vanish in a few days, and Niko's safety team is monitoring the situation. "We are now very conscious because if anything happens, you (journalists) will rush here."

Deputy Commissioner of Sunamganj Jafar Siddique however said many of the displaced families are reluctant to return to their houses as each family now gets Tk 10,000 a month in compensation from Niko and that will stop when they resettle. But some families have problems like scarcity of water, he added.



Remnants of the shanty at Pallabi Bihari Palli where fire killed four people of a family yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## JMB violence

FROM PAGE 16 ties," it added.

The consular sheet noted that nationwide strikes or "hartals" are widely employed as a means of political expression in Bangladesh. The political opposition over the past several years has called a number of these hartals, resulting in the virtual shutdown of transportation and commerce, and sometimes attacks on individuals who do not observe the hartals. Clashes between rival political groups during hartals have resulted in deaths and injuries.

"American citizens are therefore urged to avoid all political protests, demonstrations and marches. During hartals, American citizens should exercise caution in all areas and remain inside their hotels, residences, schools, or workplaces whenever possible," it said.

Due to kidnappings and other security incidents, including those involving foreign nationals, US citizens are advised against travelling to the Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban hill districts.

Additionally, the US embassy continues to receive reports of incidents of kidnappings, arms and narcotics smuggling and clashes between local Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees in areas near Rohingya refugee camps in the Teknaf, Kutupalong, Ukha and Ramu areas of Cox's Bazar district.

The US embassy also recom-

mends against travel to these areas. Individuals who choose to visit these districts are urged to exercise extreme caution.

On August 17 last year, the communiqué said JMB claimed responsibility for over 500 coordinated small bomb blasts in virtually every part of Bangladesh that killed two persons and injured several dozen. Subsequent JMB bombings and suicide attacks have killed approximately 30 Bangladeshis, including judges, court workers, police officers and bystanders, and wounded nearly 200 Bangladeshis.

"JMB statements call for the imposition of strict Islamic law in Bangladesh, justify the indiscriminate use of suicide attacks, and condemn Western social and political concepts as un-Islamic," the communiqué said.

About political demonstrations, it said political confrontations manifested in demonstrations, rallies, and marches are unpredictable and have the potential for violence. In general, demonstrations occur on Friday afternoons but may take place at any time and any place.

"Protesters have used physical force, rocks, guns, and explosive devices during confrontations. In the past, police have used rubber bullets, tear gas, live ammunition, water cannons, and other riot equipment when confronting protesters," it said.

## Fuel prices up

FROM PAGE 1 depots is four crore litres.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman's proposal to increase fuel prices coupled with the shortage of fuel at the filling stations have pushed the price of petrol up to Tk 80 at some places in Sirajganj, a Tk 80 rise per litre.

Our Bogra correspondent reports that an official of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) said they were compelled to shut the floating depot at Chilmari in Kurigram. Fuel reserve in another floating depot at the Balari river port in Gaibandha is expected to run out today, official sources said.

The BPC official said if the fuel-carrying vessels fail to reach the fuel depots today, many shallow pumps for irrigation will go out of operation. But it has become totally uncertain when those vessels will reach the depots as the water level in Pechakhola channel has fallen making it impossible for those vessels to move forward.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has started dredging the channel. It will take a few days to finish the dredging.

Already fuel prices have increased by at least Tk 5 to Tk 7 a litre at all the filling stations. The administration has deployed police at the Baghabari fuel depot to control agitated people.

## Hasina: Militancy

FROM PAGE 1

political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury quoted her as telling Rocca.

Rocca declined to say anything after the 90-minute meeting at Hasina's Sudha Sadan residence at Dhamondi in the city.

Tackling terrorism and militancy figured prominently at the meeting, sources said.

The meeting also discussed the AL-led opposition alliance's reservations about participation in the next general elections if its demands for reforms in the caretaker government system and Election Commission (EC) are not met.

The AL chief explained to Rocca that the demands are in conformity with the country's constitution and aimed to ensure free and fair elections.

According to the sources, Rocca told the AL leaders at the meeting that the opposition could join parliament sessions and play their due role. In response, the AL leaders said they would take a decision in this regard at the upcoming meeting of the party's parliamentary wing.

"We narrated our position on the reform proposals," Saber told reporters. "We are in a movement for a level playing field," he said about the next election.

Asked if they have discussed the

outcome of talks between Rocca and the government, Saber said the government had earlier said the problem of militancy would be resolved within two months, which proved its full control over militants.

"May be they will arrest Bangla Bhai before the next election and claim credit for this," Saber said. "So, we think there is a lack of sincerity on the government's side."

He mentioned that earlier the government had arrested Bangla Bhai and released him while Industries Minister and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matiur Rahman Nizami had said Bangla Bhai was a creation of the media.

At the meeting, Hasina also pointed out at the "zero outcome" of the probe into the killing of former finance minister and her party leader Shah AMS Kibria, recoveries of huge arms and ammunition and grenade attacks during the tenure of this government.

Rocca was accompanied by US Charge d'Affaires in Dhaka Judith A Chammas and senior US Embassy officials.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Presidium member Kazi Jafar Ullah, International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain and former ambassador Ziauddin were present at the meeting.

## Fire at Pallabi

FROM PAGE 1

Mohamad Sultan, a local, told The Daily Star.

"After removing a tin sheet, I found the charred bodies," Sultan said.

The body of the baby girl was found under her mother's chest. Perhaps, she tried to save her baby at the last moment, but failed.

The fire fighters recovered the bodies and sent them to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital for autopsy.

Seven people had been killed in three incidents of fire at the same refugee camp since 1986.

## Brutality

FROM PAGE 15

was handed over to the police as a cycle lifter.

The incidents aroused strong resentment within the local party unit. Some BNP leaders and workers on condition of anonymity criticised Amzad for such behaviour. The lawmaker could not be contacted for comments.

## Ijtema begins

FROM PAGE 1

Zubayer Hossain of Bangladesh preached special sermons.

Hundreds of people made temporary shelters outside the main canopy built for the devotees. Scholars on Islam from home and abroad gave bayans (sermons) all day yesterday.

BDNEWS from Tongi reports: Two persons, including an unidentified woman, died of cardiac arrest on the Ijtema ground yesterday. One was identified as Nazir Hossain, 50, of Motijheel in the city. He suffered a heart attack yesterday morning. An unidentified woman died in the evening.

Earlier on Wednesday, a devotee from abroad died of a heart attack.

The law enforcers yesterday held 13 Myanmar nationals from the Ijtema ground for entering the Bangladesh territory without legal papers, but released them later.

Besides, 11 people were arrested for theft and mugging at the Ijtema ground and handed over to Tongi police.

On the first day of Ijtema, sermons highlighting the teachings of Islam went on for all day with breaks for prayers. Apart from listening to the bayans, the devotees offered prayers to Allah, standing amid a huge Jamaat (gathering).

"It's something otherworldly to say prayers (namaj) alongside so many devotees," said Naimuddin, who travels all the way from Noakhali to attend the Ijtema almost every year.

Hundreds of people wandered back and forth with luggage to find some room under the canopy. "My fellow travellers have gone in different directions to search for shelter," said Akkas Al yesterday afternoon. He just arrived there with some 50 others from Rajshahi.

People, however, did not complain much about the management or the basic amenities arranged for them at the venue. "The water, sanitation and security seem far better than those over the past few years," said Adil Ahmed, a businessman from Khulna.

Mobile courts with about 20 magistrates patrolled round the clock the areas adjacent to the canopies. They also raided the makeshift restaurants and shops installed for the congregation.

Magistrate Gopal Chandra Shil yesterday told The Daily Star that he found the situation "satisfactory".

"Visiting the adjacent areas, I found that the food is of good enough quality," he said. Some of the vendors were selling rotten fruits but the courts took instant action, compelling them to get rid of those, he said, adding that he himself had seized some sub-standard weight scales.

Over 200 devotees received treatment at Tongi 50-bed Hospital and hundreds of people took treatment and medicines free of cost at the medical camps set up for Ijtema.

"Most of the patients are suffering from diarrhoea, food poisoning, cold and some other minor problems," said a doctor providing free treatment. "If anyone comes to us in a critical condition, we refer them to hospitals," he added.

The Ijtema organisers, like the previous years, have arranged solemnising marriages without dowry, scheduled to take place tomorrow.

Vehicular movements on the roads approaching the Ijtema ground have been restricted from 6:00am to 6:00pm. The authorities have requested the Ijtema goers to walk to the ground from the airport area.

## Hamas under pressure

FROM PAGE 16

Olmert said in a statement.

Fatah, turned out of office by Palestinians angry over its corrupt and inefficient government, offered no help to Hamas, catapulted into leadership after its first foray into parliamentary politics.

Despite the ballot-box endorsement of Hamas's militant tactics, Abbas said he remained committed to reaching peace with Israel through negotiations.

"I am determined to implement the programme on which I was elected," Abbas said in a televised address. "It is a programme which is based on negotiations as a means to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict with Israel."

Abbas confirmed that he would ask Hamas to form a new government. "Of course, I am going to ask the majority party to form the government," he told reporters.

Ismail Haniya, Hamas's top candidate in the election, which saw the movement win 76 of the 132 seats in parliament, said he would meet Abbas in the next few days to discuss forming a "political partnership".

While Hamas will now almost certainly head up the government, its areas of responsibility would be limited to domestic issues such as health, education and unemployment.

Peace negotiations, already frozen for many months, and foreign policy will essentially remain within the remit of Abbas.

Deputies said the new government would likely allow Abbas to take the lead on peace negotiations.

"I do not think that there will be any interference between the president's prerogatives and those of the next prime minister as the basic law clearly defines the role between the two," said the outgoing deputy speaker of the parliament, Hassan Khreishah.

Outgoing independent MP Azmi Shuebi added that the "prime minister is responsible for domestic policy while foreign policy is in the president's hands."

The leadership of Hamas, whose charter calls for the destruction of the Jewish state, issued contrasting statements during the campaign about how they would try to bring peace to the region.

However they all maintained the "right" to pursue armed conflict at the same time as embracing parliamentary democracy for the first time.

Despite being behind the majority of attacks during a five-year Palestinian uprising, Hamas has carried out no bombings for more than a year.

Yet international players in the stalled peace process made clear that Hamas would need to do more than hold fire if it wanted legitimacy.

The diplomatic "quartet" behind a peace plan known as the roadmap urged Hamas to not only renounce violence but also accept Israel's right to exist.

The quartet issued its statement after a conference call of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Russian Foreign Minister

Sergei Lavrov, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and external relations commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

"A two-state solution to the conflict requires all participants in the democratic process to renounce violence and terror, accept Israel's right to exist, and disarm," which targets the creation of a Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

The result confronted Israel's Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert with his first major crisis since assuming the reins of power from coma-stricken Ariel Sharon on January 4.

After Olmert discussed the result with senior political and defence officials, the government stated it would "not negotiate with a Palestinian administration if its members include an armed terrorist organisation that calls for the destruction of the state of Israel."

Olmert himself faces an election on March 28, aware his Kadima party's lead in the polls could be whittled away if the situation on the ground unravels.

Right-wing opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu said the victory for Hamas was a result of Israel's unilateral pullout over the summer from the Gaza Strip "which communicated weakness and that Hamas's terror works."

While violence on election day was minimal, armed clashes between Hamas and Fatah supporters in Gaza highlighted the lingering tensions. Three people were taken to hospital after the clashes in the southern town of Khan Yunis.

"Even in Fatah's worst nightmares and Hamas's best dreams, the earthquake that took place could not have been predicted," the Palestinian newspaper Al-Ayyam said.

## Tribute to Kibria

FROM PAGE 16

Hasina joined the milad. BNP leaders Khondokar Delwar Hossain and Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, AL leaders Johra Tajuddin, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak MP, Tofail Ahmed, ASHK Sadeque MP, Sabir Hossain Chowdhury, Mohiuddin Kader, Mostofa Jalal Moinuddin, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury, Maha, Sohel Taj MP and Prof Nazma Rahman, Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, JSD leaders Syed Jafar Sajjad and Moinuddin Khan Badal, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University (DU) AK Azad Chowdhury, DU teacher AAMZ Arefin Siddique, Supreme Court Bar Association President Mahbubey Alam were, among others, present.

AL will hold a discussion at Diploma Engineers Institute today with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Meanwhile, the trial of the Kibria murder case is yet to begin although the government announced last year that the trial of the case, filed after the killing, will be held at Sylhet Speedy Trial Tribunal.

## Specialists scant

FROM PAGE 1

village under Lohagara in Narail district, was admitted to the DMCH in October 2004. Several months ago, her husband and in-laws doused her with kerosene and then set her to burn, burning her severely.

Her neighbours took her to Narail Health Complex. After being shifted from hospital to hospital for several months, she was finally sent to the DMCH, where the doctors had to amputate all the fingers of her left hand and two of the right, as they were beyond cure.

During a visit to the DMCH last week, The Daily Star saw how Sufia's skin had shrunk and her legs and hands become stiff as a result of not getting proper treatment in time.

Another patient, a four-year-old orphan named Anamika hailing from Kishoreganj, whose cheek and hands had been burnt at the age of only three months, was found struggling with her twisted fingers. Reconstruction of the girl's fingers will require plastic surgery, which is very costly. But if she had received proper medical care immediately, her fingers would be fine, burn specialists said.

People who do not get proper treatment within the first few days of getting burnt may lose normal functioning of their injured hands, legs or necks. Skin grafting is needed if the wound remains raw for two weeks. Often the limbs would become rigid if proper treatment is delayed, said Professor AZM Salek, head of the DMCH burn unit.

"Most of our local medical centres don't have proper provisions for skin grafting. Even our burn unit can't do it properly for lack of manpower. Moreover, lots of people with burn injuries come to the DMCH after six or seven months of the incidents. By that time the damages have gone beyond any scope of cure," he added.

The situation can be changed if the DMCH burn unit is turned into a burn treatment and plastic surgery institute, said Dr Samanta Sen. It would be a prudent thing to do, since the unit already has two six-storey buildings that could be used by the institute, he said.

"As the institute would generate manpower it would be able to work round the clock. The burn unit is now providing full service to the

patients only until noon," he said, adding setting up burn units in every medical college and hospital across the country is an imperative.

There is a severe seat crisis in the DMCH burn unit, which has only 50 beds now and expects to get 50 more beds soon, the authorities said.

On top of that, other hospitals send their patients with burn injuries to this unit, aggravating the crisis, said Samanta.

"Patients with burn injuries are admitted to the casualty ward first instead of the burn unit, since there is a scarcity of seats. This has resulted in an onrush of burn patients at the casualty ward, creating sufferings for other patients, as they are not getting seats here," said a nurse at the DMCH casualty ward.

Dr Sen said patients with burn injuries take much time to heal and they also need much care and attention. "So a patient has to occupy a seat for a long time. But the scarcity of seat sometimes forces us to release them before they are cured, which we should not have done."

"But we always visit the burn victims in the casualty ward and try our best to treat them," he said adding that actually they have nothing to do with the onrush of patients as the seats and the budget are already limited.

"Though the burn unit will have 100 beds by June, we think it should have 500 at least. It will require 50 medical officers and at least 100 Class-Four employees in the unit, which is now operating with only 12 doctors treating 70-80 patients a day," said Samanta.

"We are in more pressure during the winter, when the number of accidents increases, since people warm themselves by sitting beside fires and use hot water for different purposes," he went on.

The number of burn injuries from electric shocks is also very high, which take place mostly in slum areas, he added.

Sen also recommended a country-wide awareness-raising programme to reduce the number of burn injuries.