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Hamas under pressure to pursue peace

Israel rules out possibility of talks

AFP, AP, Hamallah Hamas was under mounting pressure to renounce violence Friday after its shock election win as Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas prepared to task the radical group with forming a new government.

president Abbas was to ask Hamas to form a new government, with the chief candidate for the Islamist movement saying he expected a meeting in the next few days. Israel ruled out talks and the vanquished Fatah Party rejected a joint government with Hamas after the Islamic movement's sweeping victory in Palestinian elections, in what could be first steps to isolate the militant group and freeze Middle East peace initiatives.

European parliament members spoke of the possibility that donors would cut off vital aid, putting Hamas under extreme pressure to moderate its hardline positions. The US consul in Jerusalem, Jacob Walles, said Friday it was too early

to discuss the possibility. Israel was unprepared for the Hamas landslide. Foreign and defence ministry scenarios put such a stunning blow to the long-ruling Fatah as a low probability, officials said. But after the rout, Israel's acting prime minister, Ehud Olmert, quickly ruled out talks: "The state of Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian administration if even part of it is an armed terrorist organisation calling for the destruction of the state of Israel,"

KIBRIA MURDER Family demands UN probe as Rocca visits residence

Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday demanded UN investigation into the killing when US State Department Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca called on them at Kibria's Dhanmondi residence in the capital. "We told Rocca that the present government has conducted a farcical investigation to cover the masterminds of the Kibria killing, leading us to seek a UN investigation as was done after the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri," Asma Kibria, wife of Kibria, told the journalists. "Rocca told us that the US gov



Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca meets Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at the latter's Sudha Sadan residence in the capital yesterday.



Candidates under Kha unit of Dhaka University stream out of the Curzon Hall after their written test for admission into honours 1st year yesterday.

People, parties pay tribute to Kibria

The first death anniversary of former finance minister and Awami League (AL) lawmaker SAMS Kibria was observed yesterday. Kibria was killed in a grisly grenade attack on an Awami League rally at Boidderbazar in Habiganj on January 27 last year. In the morning, family members of the slain AL leader, including his wife Asma Kibria, son Reza Kibria, and sisters and brothers placed wreaths at his grave at Banani graveyard and offered fete. Different socio-cultural and political organisations also paid homage to the leader and placed wreaths at the grave. AL central leaders including Abdur Razzak MP, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil MP, Kazi Jafarullah MP, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Kader, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Mirza Azam MP and Asim Kumar Ukil paid tribute to the slain party leader, placed wreaths at his grave and offered fete. A milad mahfil was held at late Kibria's Dhanmondi residence after Asar prayers. Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh

TENGRATILA BLOWOUTS Displaced families afraid of going back to houses

Gas still spews through cracks, no water level. The families who have returned are also feeling frustrated as no water can be pumped out from tubewells, all their trees died and they cannot grow vegetables at their homesteads due to non-availability of water, locals told a group of journalists who visited the area on Tuesday. "What shall we do when we return to our houses... How can we be sure that spewing of gas that still continues will stop shortly, and it will not increase," said one of the displaced people, now living at a relative's house. Two blowouts -- one in January and the other in June last year -- during Niko's drilling dried up trees and crops and baked soil in about a square kilometre area on the north of the gas field in Tengratila, also known as Chhatak marginal gas field. Environmentalists demonstrated immediately after the blowouts and a committee of the environment ministry later demanded Tk 84 crore in compensation from the Canadian company, which has repeatedly declined to make the payment saying the estimate does not have sound basis. Immediately after the blowouts, groundwater started coming out of local tubewells automatically but no water can be pumped out now. Faizur Rahman, who is still staying at his father-in-law's house away from the gas field, said the displaced people are worried if they can grow any crop on their land. A displaced Rehana Begum, 35, staying with her relatives who have come back to their houses following Niko's request, said most of the tubewells installed by Niko cannot draw water. In the wake of scarcity of drinking water, Niko installed more than 30 tubewells in the affected area but only a few are operative.

Indians should protest Delhi's injustices to neighbours

Mannan Bhuiyan says BSS, Dhaka FEJB Chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury chaired the function held at the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). Eminent water expert and country representative of International Union of Nature Conservation (IUCN) Dr Ainun Nishat and Prof Dr Mohammad Mujibur Rahman of the Civil Engineering Department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) also spoke on the occasion. Mannan Bhuiyan said Bangladesh has been facing serious ecological imbalance, environmental degradation and changes of climate because of the man-made strike on its river system. Most of the main rivers are dying and others counting days to die since Bangladesh is not getting adequate flow of waters in lean periods, he said. "Surface water is the lifeline for Bangladesh people," he said, adding that the country's climate is behaving abnormally due to long-term bad impacts of water scarcity

POLICE FIRING AT KANSAT Shibganj goes on strike indefinitely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi People enforced an indefinite strike at Shibganj upazila from yesterday protesting the killing of eight people in police firing at Kansat and demanding the release of arrested leaders who conducted movement for smooth power supply in the area. Shimina Akhtar Parul, wife of arrested Palli Bidyut Samity Subscribers Development Association former president Golam Rabbani announced the strike in a meeting on Thursday. Normal life at the frontier upazila has remained almost paralysed and business at Sona Mosque land port halted for the fifth consecutive day yesterday. No vehicles including trucks carrying goods could start from the land port, as authorities could not restore the broken culvert at Takshaldighi. Putting fresh barricades of felled trees on some 9-kilometre road, people in large groups kept vigil at different points while police and administrative officials refrained from removing the barricades, apparently to avert further violence. Arrest of three power movement leaders on January 22 prompted public demonstrations that faced police atrocities, leading to the death of eight and injury to about 200 people. Ruling BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Mia, widely blamed for the arrest of three leaders and subsequent police atrocities, went to Shibganj yesterday but did not visit the troubled areas. The district administration held a meeting with union parishad chairmen and local elite to restrain people from road barricade, Chapainawabganj Deputy Commissioner Nurul Islam said. "Releasing the arrested depends on court," he said, adding, "We did not go to the troubled areas as we don't want any more confrontation with the people who are still agitating. We want local politicians to act."

A lawmaker's brutality

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari A ruling BNP lawmaker assaulted a businessman yesterday and a party worker on Thursday for hanging up and distributing calendars containing the picture of a rival candidate for BNP nomination in the coming parliamentary elections. BNP lawmaker from Saidpur (Nilphamary-4 constituency) Amzad Hossain Sarkar also handed over one of them to police on charges of stealing bicycle. The police, however, released him after a few hours. Amzad stopped his jeep in front of the electric shop of Bidhan Chandra Roy, 42, on Shaheed Dr Zikrul Haque road at around 10:00am and started to beat him for hanging up a calendar with the picture of Amzad's rival Prof Mahfuzur Rahman, Bidhan told newsmen. Earlier on Thursday, Amzad's men forcibly took BNP worker Kazi Azizul Islam, 34, to the party office at around 9:00pm and beat him up for distributing the same calendar, the victim told reporters. Later, he

US CONSULAR INFORMATION Potential for more JMB violence considered serious

UNB, Dhaka A US State Department communiqué has said the security situation in Bangladesh is volatile, mentioning that a terrorist bombing campaign and threats to US and Western interests have led to increased security measures around US government facilities in and around capital Dhaka. It said banned Islamist terrorist group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) has identified the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom as alleged enemies of Islam. It is unclear at this point what impact the recent arrests of senior JMB figures will have on JMB's ability to mount new attacks. "However, the potential for continued JMB violence, in Dhaka and elsewhere, should be considered real and serious," Bangladesh Consular Information sheet released by US Department of State Travel Warnings said. The communiqué said the US embassy continues to see anti-American rhetoric and sporadic anti-American protests following Friday prayers at the national mosque, largely due to US involvement in Iraq. "Americans are urged to avoid travel to the downtown Dhaka area on Fridays whenever possible. Visitors to Bangladesh should check with the Consular Section of the US embassy in Dhaka for updated information on political demonstrations or other activity

Arrest warrants against Salman Rahman and six others

BDNEWS, Dhaka A Dhaka court on Wednesday issued arrest warrants against industrialist and Deputy Chairman of Beximco Group Salman F Rahman and six others in a case filed with Dohar Police Station. On August 15, 2005, Sub-Inspector Masudur Rahman Khan, filed a case against a number of local Awami League (AL) leaders and workers with Dohar Police Station, accusing them of obstructing police in discharging their duties at Dohar while the AL men were observing the mourning day on the occasion of the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. However, the names of Salman F Rahman and six others were not in the first information report (FIR). On December 30, 2005, police submitted a charge-sheet against 45 people, including Salman F Rahman.

Prayer Timing January 28. Table with columns for Azan and Jamaat times for Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, Esha.

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World powers haggle over nuke resolution

Bush backs Russian plan on Iran UN Security Council. The United States, Britain, Germany and France were haggling with Russia and China over the wording of the draft resolution for an emergency IAEA meeting in Vienna on February 2. The confidential draft -- read to AFP -- recommends to the Security Council "that it consider making clear to Iran that outstanding China in supporting a Russian plan to halt the Iran nuclear crisis. Russia has offered to manufacture nuclear fuel for Iran and collect the waste so that it cannot be used for nuclear weapons development. Although Iran has said it is interested in the idea, the United States continues to lobby hard to get the International Atomic Energy Agency to refer Iran to the

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