

# Israel may reoccupy part of Gaza

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli troops could reoccupy parts of the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip if cross border violence escalates, a senior army general told the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper yesterday.

Major-General Yoav Gallant, commander of Israel's southern forces, said the army had stepped up an offensive against militants firing rockets into Israel since the militant Islamist group Hamas took over the Palestinian government last month.

"We're talking about more aggressive military operations ... we may need to enter the Gaza Strip for short or long periods if this escalation continues," he told the mass circulation newspaper in an interview.

Israel completed its withdrawal of Jewish settlers and troops from Gaza last September after 38 years of occupation.

The Haaretz newspaper quoted senior army commanders as saying troops were being trained for an offensive in the Gaza Strip as part of contingency plans the army had drawn up.

But the newspaper quoted the commanders as saying such an operation was unlikely to be implemented in the near future as it could undermine international backing for Israel since Hamas took over the Palestinian government on March 29.

Israeli army chief Dan Halutz preferred airforce missile strikes against militants in Gaza as well as artillery fire on areas near the Gaza-Israel border used by militants to fire rockets into Israel, the newspaper said.

An army spokeswoman said 300 rockets had been fired into Israel since Hamas won a January 25 Palestinian election compared to 100 rockets fired in the five months between September and late January. The homemade rockets cause panic but few casualties.

# Foreign doctors in Britain protest at immigration rules change

AFP, London

Hundreds of foreign doctors protested in London yesterday against new rules that limit job prospects for medical workers from outside Europe, where many staff in British healthcare hail from.

They claimed the changes would cause unfair discrimination with it becoming very difficult for non-European Union doctors to find work in Britain.

The new immigration rules, announced in March, mean that people from outside the EU will only be eligible to work in the National Health Service (NHS) if the job cannot be filled by an EU national.

Many of the doctors protesting outside Prime Minister Tony Blair's Downing Street office were from India, with others from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Libya.

They fear that people who have been working in trainee posts for several years in the belief they could have a career in the NHS will have to return to their countries of origin.

"The NHS has been propped up by doctors from Commonwealth countries since its inception," said Doctor Ramesh Mehta, president of the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin.

"Now the government are saying 'We don't need you'."

Doctor Aruj Qayum, 33, from east London's Newham University

# Dhaka declines again

FROM PAGE 1 between the two countries such as non-tariff and para-tariff barriers, customs procedure, banking facilities, and port infrastructure.

The two sides decided that the Bangladesh-India joint task force will examine the prevailing non-tariff and para-tariff barriers and accordingly make a list in the shortest possible time.

Commerce ministers of the two countries will meet in Benapole and Petropole landport on June 19 and 21 this year to review the finds of the task force.

"We will meet soon to resolve the issue of tariff and non-tariff barriers in India-Bangladesh trade," said Jairam Ramesh at a joint press briefing after the meeting.

He however observed that bureaucratic and political tangles in both the countries contribute to the imposition of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers.

Ramesh also noted that Indian investment to Bangladesh will be ensured.

About Tata's potential investment in Bangladesh, he said, "India does not talk about such issues in bilateral trade talks. The Indian government however supports Tata in its endeavour to invest in Bangladesh."

He said Tata's getting the opportunity to invest in Bangladesh would mean benefits at first for Bangladesh, then for India and thirdly, for the Indian industrial conglomerate.

In his speech, the Bangladesh commerce minister said, "We will detect the problems remaining in trade between Bangladesh and India and then make a list of those."

"Thereafter, we will work to overcome the obstacles," he added. **LOCAL EXPERTS' PESSIMISM** Most of the local experts who attended the meeting expressed pessimism about the bilateral talks.

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The Israeli army has stepped up air strikes against militants and well as artillery barrages against what it says are rocket launch sites used by militants.

The strikes on Gaza have killed 20 Palestinians, mostly militants, since the start of April. Among them was a seven-year-old girl killed when an artillery shell hit a house in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiyah.

Haaretz quoted an army officer as saying the break in security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian security forces since Hamas' rise to power had eliminated a mechanism for resolving problems without violence.

"There is no longer anyone to mediate during a flare-up, neither the Egyptians nor the Americans. Consequently, they speak with Qassams (rockets) and we respond with 155mm shells," it quoted the officer as saying.

# Thousands illegally detained in Iraq: UN

AFP, Geneva

Iraqi authorities are illegally detaining thousands of people, the United Nations' senior human rights official for the country said on Friday, and also urged the US-led coalition to charge or release its prisoners.

Gianni Magazzeni, who is based in Baghdad, told reporters a total of 29,565 people were being detained in Iraq, some 14,222 of them by coalition forces.

Of the 15,000 people held by the local Iraqi authorities, only 8,300 were being held by the justice ministry, which is the only body that has the right to detain suspects for more than 72 hours, Magazzeni said.

He said another 6,000 held by the interior ministry and some 460 held by the defense ministry were therefore "not even being detained in accordance with Iraqi law."

Magazzeni added that the United Nations believed the number of suspects being detained by coalition forces was far too high.

"We think that the 15,000 being held for 'urgent security reasons' are far too many and we are working very closely (with the coalition) to reduce that number considerably," the UN envoy said.

He said the United Nations still does not have access to prisoners being held in unidentified coalition prisons, and called for them to be released or handed over to Iraqi authorities to be charged.

"We want them to speed up this process," Magazzeni said, adding that the UN was "very concerned about ongoing violations" of human rights in Iraq.

"Torture and summary executions happen every day," he said.

Magazzeni said so-called death squads had become more active since the bombing of the revered Shia shrine at Samarra, and there were indications that the police and other authorities were involved.

"We've seen an increase in the instances of allegations of actions by such militias or death squads that sometimes are linked with police forces or forces within state entities in Iraq."

Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr Solagh on April 12 acknowledged the existence of death squads within certain divisions of the security forces.

A recent upsurge of sectarian violence in Iraq that has left hundreds of dead is often blamed by Sunnis on militias wearing uniforms belonging to the security forces.

# FM

FROM PAGE 16 the European Union.

Khan said the government has received wide acclamation from Europe and America after the capture of the two JMB kingpins and around 700 operatives of the banned militant outfit.

During his 10-day visit to four European capitals, the foreign minister will meet the French foreign minister, Dutch foreign and development cooperation ministers, and the Swiss foreign minister to discuss bilateral issues, and trade and investment cooperation. He will also pay a courtesy call on the Swiss president.

Khan will also exchange views on important international developments around the world.

In Brussels, the foreign minister will meet with the external affairs commissioner of the European Commission and have separate interactive meetings with Euro parliamentarians.

He will also hold meetings with the representatives of business communities in France and the Netherlands to discuss ways of increasing export of Bangladeshi products to the European countries and investment in Bangladesh.

Khan is expected to return home on May 1.

# BNP claims 14-party

FROM PAGE 1 tomorrow which, he alleged, was aimed at destroying the country's investment environment and economy.

He said Awami League now realises that it has no future in the next elections, as it has done nothing good for the people in the last four and a half years, rather tried to destroy the democracy.

On the other hand, in his opinion, the 4-party alliance in that period has improved the law and order, arrested Islamist militant leaders and let the democratic institutions work independently.

According to the LGRD minister, AL could not undertake any pro-people programme; rather, when any non-political issue like price hike of essentials or fertilisers came up, it wanted to cash in on it by turning it into a political issue.

"We are well aware of the price spiral of essential commodities. But, it does not depend on us. It depends on global market factors," Bhuiyan argued and claimed the price of essentials is now under control.

BNP City Unit President and Mayor of Dhaka Sadeque Hossain Khoka presided over the meeting. In his speech, Khoka dubbed AL a fascist party, which speaks of democracy but practises it not.

He urged the 14-party alliance to abstain from creating anarchy and warned that BNP leaders and activists would resist such activities by all means. "Wherever there will be attacks, we shall resist," he proclaimed.

Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, Commerce Ministry Adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu, State Minister for Labour Amanullah Aman, Harun Ur Rashid Khan Monno MP, Moazzem Hossain Alal

# Bus plunge

FROM PAGE 16 missing as of 7:30pm.

According to police and local people, the bus bearing number Pabna-BA-131, fell into the river as the driver lost control over the steering. The bus also pushed four motorbikes and a three-wheeler tempo into the river.

Divers from Khulna have reached the spot started rescue operation.

# Govt dilly-dally

FROM PAGE 16 Minister Office.

The combine also held two preparatory meetings yesterday at the AL's Bangabandhu Avenue office to make tomorrow's shutdown a success.

Talking to reporters after a meeting in morning, AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed said although they have nominated five representatives from their side for dialogue on the proposed reforms, the government is simply wasting time in this regard.

The prime minister is presenting a distorted version of the reform proposals at public meetings in different parts of the country, Tofail said. "When the head of the alliance government describes our reform proposals as illogical, the ruling BNP secretary general's letter inviting us to sit across the table is meaningless."

On the government allegation that the opposition is engaged in a destructive movement, the AL stalwart said they would continue movement and dialogue simultaneously as part of democratic practices.

The meeting chaired by Omar Ali was attended by Obaidul Quader, among others.

# Ctg port keeps

FROM PAGE 16 authority issued such a circular, when we need to increase the capacity of the port."

When all the ports in the world persistently invite ships to call at them to increase their revenue, it really astonishes one that Chittagong Port discourages them, he told The Daily Star. "Such a circular would only frustrate the shipping agents and mar the port's reputation."

In recent years, the Chittagong Port magistrate has recovered some 700 acres of encroached port land, which could be used as container yards to widen their storage area, he pointed out.

A CPA high official admitted to discouraging any rise in container ships calling at the port, which is reeling under manifold problems. Piling up of containers, and lack of berthing and storage facilities are only three of them, he said.

"Although the circular may damage the port's reputation abroad, we were forced to dissuade shipping agents from calling in more ships, as the port is now unable to cope with increased cargo," he explained. The CPA also wanted to avoid the hue and cry the shipping agents usually raise whenever the turn-around or waiting time of ships goes up, the port official added.

He said, although the volume of export-import, including import in containers, has shot up many times over the last few years, the port's container storage capacity has not.

MP, Nasiruddin Pintu MP, Shafiq Bari Babu and Azizul Bari Helal also spoke at the rally.

Khandaker Mosharraf said like the opposition, BNP too demands fair elections. So, the sit-in programme in front of the PMO is illegal and AL should apologise for its men's attack on Monno's house.

In his turn, Aman alleged, in the name of the sit-in programme, AL gathered its cadres from across the country to create anarchy in the capital.

He said, "The aim of all this is to come to power through the backdoor. But Sheikh Hasina will not get any more chance to be in the Prime Minister's Office in future."

# WB

FROM PAGE 16 ment is expected to spend it in poverty reduction programmes.

Again, the WB will lend \$300 million in FY09 for the construction of the Padma Bridge.

The WB is being selective while choosing projects for FY07 as the fiscal will see the end of the present government, taking over of power by the caretaker government followed by the coming of a new government. "To mitigate the risk, the FY07 portfolio is planned to include projects that are at an advanced stage of preparation and would likely be processed before the caretaker government takes power," said the CAS report.

The WB will be attaching the highest importance to improving governance while releasing its lending. To attain that objective the WB is going to reorganise itself both in terms of staff and institutional process and culture.

The CAS report says: "Staffing adjustments will start with key members of the Bangladesh country team. A governance adviser will be hired in FY06; a Dhaka based legal and judicial reform adviser has been hired; and Dhaka-based positions for an operations adviser and lead economist with a strong focus on governance will be advertised in FY 06/07. New sector team members with strong governance experience will also be sought."

The major projects financed by WB loans for the next fiscal year include DSC-4, crash power rehabilitation programme (\$150 million), Dhaka Chittagong sewerage and drainage (\$100 million) and educational support credit (\$100 million).

# New outbreak of deadly bird flu in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani authorities yesterday confirmed a new outbreak of deadly H5N1 bird flu at a chicken farm, the country's fourth, and destroyed at least 10,000 birds at five more suspect sites.

Test results confirmed earlier suspicions that the virus was present at a farm in Tarlai, a village on the outskirts of the capital Islamabad, said a spokesman for the Food, Agriculture and Livestock Ministry.

"The farm was infected with H5N1 virus and we have already culled 15,000 birds there and taken all protective measures," the spokesman, Mohammad Afzal, told AFP.

Authorities took samples at over two dozen nearby farms at Tarlai and found another five that are suspected of having H5N1.

"Our veterinary staff have destroyed chickens at five more farms, each having 2,000 to 3,000 birds, as we suspected they were also infected with the deadly virus," Afzal said.

Pakistan Sunday confirmed an H5N1 outbreak at another chicken farm near Islamabad.

Its first two bird flu cases were confirmed last month at two chicken farms in North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

No human cases have yet been reported.

The H5N1 strain has killed about 100 people in seven countries since 2003. Scientists fear a global pandemic if the virus mutates and becomes easily transmissible between humans.

# Locals attack

FROM PAGE 16 be a gentle person, to make him do the crime.

Sumon was playing in front of his house along with his younger brother on Wednesday around 1:00pm when Ratan called him and he was found murdered later on. Sumon's parents and two sisters were at work when he was kidnapped. Police found his body around 4:00pm in side Anwara's house. He was laid to rest at a local graveyard on Thursday.

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# 40 hurt

FROM PAGE 16 bombs were blasted during the fight. Police rushed to the spot around 2:00am and brought the situation under control.

On contact, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sawdagar Mustafizur Rahman blamed police for the incident. The UNO claimed he had earlier ordered police to oust the gamblers from the shrine, but police failed to comply.

# US starts

FROM PAGE 16 deadlocked on April 7, but will take up the matter next week.

Since then, the US state of Georgia enacted one of the toughest immigration laws in the United States, requiring employers to verify the status of workers before hiring them and penalizing those who hire undocumented workers.

The law requires employers to verify immigration status for anyone seeking state social benefits, public jobs or government contracts, with possible 20 year sentences for non-compliance.

Immigrants' rights advocates have also turned up the heat, announcing a May 1 Great American Boycott: no work, no shopping, no school.

Democratic New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson said the recent mass mobilizations were "bigger than the civil rights movement in the '60s. This is huge."

He said the historic protests put pressure on US lawmakers who are considering election-year reforms in immigration laws.

In 2003, US officials arrested 250 undocumented workers at a Walmart night cleaning service in 21 states.

# Section 144

FROM PAGE 16 leader Ajoy Kar Khokon would be there at the meeting, they added.

Local administration decided to impose section 144 at Pankata school and its surrounding areas from 6:00am to noon today following Jubo Dal's declaration to hold a meeting there.

AL lawmaker Razzak said BNP had earlier declared meetings on our venue several times to stop us and we did not go into any confrontation with them. "This time we will hold the meeting at any cost," he added.

Kabir, a local Jubo Dal leader, said Jubo Dal had declared its public meeting before the AL did and added, "Our Saturday's public meeting was not called to invite the imposition of section 144 or postpone any meetings."

# US citizen

FROM PAGE 1 'abducted' Ehsanul on April 17 while he and his wife reached Kalachandpur Bridge Police Post at Baridhara on their way back home from shopping. Policemen at the check post cooperated with the 'abductors' as they identified themselves as intelligence officials.

They identified themselves as personnel of Criminal Investigation Department, Detective Branch, Special Branch and Rab as Ehsanul's wife wanted to know their identity, Sharif said.

He said he informed the DC (North) of DMP of the matter, who himself along with some other top police officials visited the spot. When they asked the policemen on duty at the check post about the incident, they said they had cooperated with the 'abductors' because they identified themselves as government intelligence officials.

Sharif said he also filed a case with Cantonment Police Station on April 17.

Online service of CNN reports that on Monday, Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, 19, was arrested in Dhaka, according to his sisters. He was handed over to FBI and put on a plane to New York on Thursday, the US federal sources said.

He is expected to face charges in the eastern district of New York, the report said.

CNN also reports that Sadequee's sisters said they were shocked by the news and that their brother has no ties to terrorism. His sister, Sharmin Sadequee, said her brother works for an Atlanta-based non-profit group, Raksha.

The organisation's web site states that Raksha, founded in 1995, "addresses social issues within our South Asian community such as family violence and divorce, as well as issues concerning children, senior citizens and new immigrants."

"We are very shocked and startled and hurt," said Sharmin Sadequee, who lives in Michigan. "We still don't know why he was taken by the Bangladesh government and the FBI," she said, according to the report.

Sharif said his son got married to Happy Shahhaj, daughter of his (Sharif's) elder brother SM Rahmatullah on March 3.

Ehsanul had been staying in the country since August 20 with permission from the home ministry as it is taking some time for his newly wedded wife's emigration to the US. He had been studying in North South University by transferring his course credits from the US.

"Till today I do not know where and how is my son. He has not yet been shown arrested with any specific charge or not produced before any top police official, or police station or to any court," Sharif lamented.

He said his son is an asthma patient and he is also suffering from jaundice. He has to use inhalers and receive other breathing treatments regularly.

He also said he informed the ambassador and the consul of the US Embassy in Dhaka, and the US Secretary of State in Washington DC about the matter.

"Knowing about Ehsanul's illness the US Embassy in Dhaka asked me to send the medicine and inhaler to them and I have given those to them on Thursday," he said.

He also said after detailed discussion over the issue, the US Embassy asked him to remain calm and assured him of all efforts to

# Nepali king caves

FROM PAGE 1 The King had renewed a call for dialogue and reiterated an offer of general elections in a Nepalese New Year address on April 14.

But the opposition spurned the opening as pointless and this time the king went much further, appearing to give in to opposition demands.

The alliance had steadfastly refused to back down and called Thursday for the crippling strike to be stepped up.

Tens of thousands of people poured onto the streets of Kathmandu on Thursday and again Friday despite a curfew and shoot-out-sight orders.

The curfew-bound streets of Kathmandu were quiet Friday night after the speech as people absorbed the news.

Gyandendra had come under intense international pressure to yield.

India sent a top envoy Thursday to tell the king he must open a real dialogue with the opposition to halt the bloodshed.

The United Nations repeatedly called for the restoration of democracy and respect for human rights.

And the US ambassador warned Gyandendra just hours before his speech that he must act fast to save his crown.

"I have a gut feeling that ultimately the king will have to leave if he doesn't compromise," ambassador James Moriarty said. "The king will lose his kingdom if he doesn't move fast."

Gyandendra said power would return to the people as defined under the 1990 constitution, which ushered in multi-party democracy after a long popular struggle under his assassinated brother.

The king was widely believed to oppose the 1990 constitution, which transformed the ruler into a constitutional figurehead.

rescue his son.

A fact sheet that our New York correspondent Naem Mohaiemen received from Ehsanul's sister Sharmin Sadequee via e-mail said Ehsanul was first interrogated by FBI at JFK airport in August 2005. His brother, also a US citizen, was investigated by FBI in September 2005.

Canadian authorities also visited Ehsanul's aunt in Canada to ask questions about him -- including his attendance at an Islamic school in Canada. In December, four immigration agents visited their house in Atlanta, investigating his mother's immigration status.

Atlanta FBI picked up a Pakistani-American man who is a friend of Ehsanul last August. "At that time we presume the US authorities sent information about the case to Bangladesh authorities," Sharmin's e-mail read.

Asked about the incidents of FBI interrogations of their family members in the USA, Ehsan's father said no such incident took place in the US.

Ehsanul's wife Happy Shahhaj and father-in-law SM Rahmatullah were present at the news conference.

# Russia rules

FROM PAGE 16 Washington's calls for the Bushehr project to be halted.

Iran says that its only goal is to master nuclear technology and provide cheap electricity.

Earlier Iran's ambassador to the UN's nuclear watchdog said here Friday that Tehran was ready for "full" cooperation with that agency and was prepared to answer all questions about its nuclear programme, RIA Novosti news agency reported.

"Iran plans to continue its full cooperation with the IAEA. We are ready to eliminate all outstanding doubts about our nuclear dossier," the envoy, Ali Akbar Salehi, was quoted as saying in a speech to participants at a security conference in Moscow.

Salehi's comments came a day after a senior UN nuclear inspector put off a trip to Iran in what diplomats in Vienna said was a clear sign that Tehran is failing to give the UN atomic agency key concessions it demands.

RIA Novosti reported that he also said the Iranian leadership was prepared to place its nuclear facilities under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but it provided no direct quotation from him to this effect.

The Iranian envoy said that Tehran had been conducting nuclear energy research for more than 30 years.

"It is our right to continue research under IAEA control," Salehi said.

"The United States and Europe have no right to demand from us an immediate halt to our research, which is strictly for peaceful ends."

The envoy said he was confident that the IAEA "will resolve this problem with a technical -- and not political -- point of view through negotiation and discussion in the framework of this international organisation."

The development comes as the UN Security Council waits to see if Iran honours an April 28 deadline for it to halt uranium enrichment that could be weapons-related and to cooperate fully with inspectors from the Vienna-based IAEA.

# BSF kills

FROM PAGE 1 deceased, brought the body back to Bangladesh with the help of the frontier people at about 8:00am.