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Inside Today

Magazine



A Voice that Still Reverberates: A Tribute to Abbasuddin Ahmed by Rahat Fahmida; Escape from Terror: A First Person Account of the Civil War in Somalia by Kaiser Zaman

Page 9
 Write to Mita
 Page 10
 Rising Stars
 Page 11

Article

NEW COLUMN: Spotlight on Middle East by Muslehuddin Ahmad, a former Secretary and Ambassador who is a specialist on the affairs of the Middle East

Page 4

International



Thomas Ward was arrested for threatening to assassinate President George Bush

Page 5

Business

Tough measures taken to make BTMC profitable

Page 7

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



DHL Worldwide Express, pioneers and innovators of air express industry, is harnessing latest technology

Page 3

Sport

India and Pakistan clash for Wills Trophy in Sarjah today

Page 8

NEWS BRIEFS

Cabinet meeting

The weekly meeting was held with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair in Thursday. Ministers and State Ministers-in-Charge attended the meeting, said a PID handout, reports UNB.

Hasina cancels UAE trip

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina cancelled her scheduled trip to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in view of the critical situation in the country's northern districts. She leaves Dhaka today for greater Rangpur district on a four-day tour to see the condition of the people. Awami League sources told UNB today.

AL-led boycott of parliament session continues

Discussion on northern region situation Oct 27

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League and four other opposition parties yesterday boycotted Parliament session in continuation of their walkout staged Wednesday over the Speaker's decision to reject an adjournment motion on the famine-like situation in Rangpur.

The Opposition staged the walkout after a long discussion on a point of order on this issue when the Leader of the

Opposition Sheikh Hasina failed to get the floor.

However the Awami League took a decision to join the session on October 27 after being assured by the Speaker that a discussion on the situation in the northern districts would be opened. The decision was taken after the adjournment of yesterday's session.

The Opposition had demanded that the Leader of the

Opposition be allowed to talk whenever she liked as a general convention. But Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali who presided over the session said that there was no such rule to allow everyone the floor, whenever he rose.

The Awami League, NDP, Workers Party, CPB and NAP sat at a meeting in the room of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad

at 3 p.m. yesterday and demanded three points — discussion between the Opposition leaders and the Treasury bench leaders, allowing the Leader of the Opposition the floor whenever she rose and the granting of a day for general discussion on the famine-like situation in Rangpur.

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali and the Chief Whip Delwar Hossain however came to the room of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition at around 4 p.m. and discussed the issue with them. But the Leader of the Opposition was absent at that time. She was scheduled to attend a meeting with Editors of national dailies and news agencies at Hotel Sonargaon.

But even after the assurance of the Speaker the Awami League could not decide whether it would join yesterday's session or not in the absence of Sheikh Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina turned up at around 7.30 pm when the session was already adjourned upto 4.30 p.m. October 27.

On resumption of the House at 6.30 p.m. (after Magreb prayers) Speaker Sheikh Abdur Razzak with permission from the available senior most Minister Col (retd) Oli Ahmed set a date for general discussion on October 27.

Sheikh Ansar Ali of the Jamaat-e-Islami moved the proposal in the House on behalf of the opposition to set the date.

After adjournment of the House, when Sheikh Hasina came to the Sangsad Bhaban the Awami League took a decision to join the session.

See Page 12 Col. 5



SOUND OF FOOT STEPS NEARING: People from flood-hit areas of the northern districts flow into the city for jobs and food. — Star photo

Ruling party blamed for campus violence Govt-Opposition understanding vital for democracy: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina said that both the government and the opposition should work with the spirit of understanding and responsibility to make parliamentary democracy effective.

Blaming the BNP totally for the campus violence, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament also said that a change in the ruling party's attitude was a must for bringing back peace and normalcy in the educational institutions.

Sheikh Hasina made the comments while participating in an open discussion organised by Council of Editors Thursday evening at the Sonargaon Hotel. The topic of discussion was 'Role of the Opposition to give democracy an institutional shape'.

Inaugurating the discussion, Sheikh Hasina said that the opposition extended all sorts of cooperation during the last few months to give democracy an institutional shape and had shown utmost tolerance for the greater interest. But the ruling party did not reciprocate in the same spirit, she regretted.

"But parliamentary democracy will never flourish if the voice of the opposition is gagged", she said adding "Democracy existing in name only will not lead the nation to its desired goal."

Hasina mentioned that her party cooperated with the Treasury bench in the passage

See Page 12 Col. 3



Opposition Leader of the House AL chief Sheikh Hasina talking to editors at a local hotel Thursday. — Star photo

Ershad's money in Indian, Lankan banks

By Rahman Jahangir

Deposed president HM Ershad has an unspecified amount of foreign currencies in some banks in India and Sri Lanka, according to senior US officials.

The officials confided to this correspondent in Washington recently that they were in possession of certain classified information on Ershad's money stashed in banks in India and Sri Lanka. "We're investigating," said an official tersely.

The official, however, refused to disclose whether the former Bangladesh President used the BCCI bank in Dhaka to transfer the money.

See Page 12 Col. 2

100 injured as soccer fans clash at Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 24: Over 100 people were injured in a clash between the fans of the Mohammedans Sporting Club and the PDB Football Club soon after the PDB had defeated the MSC by 1-0 goal in today's match at the Chittagong Stadium.

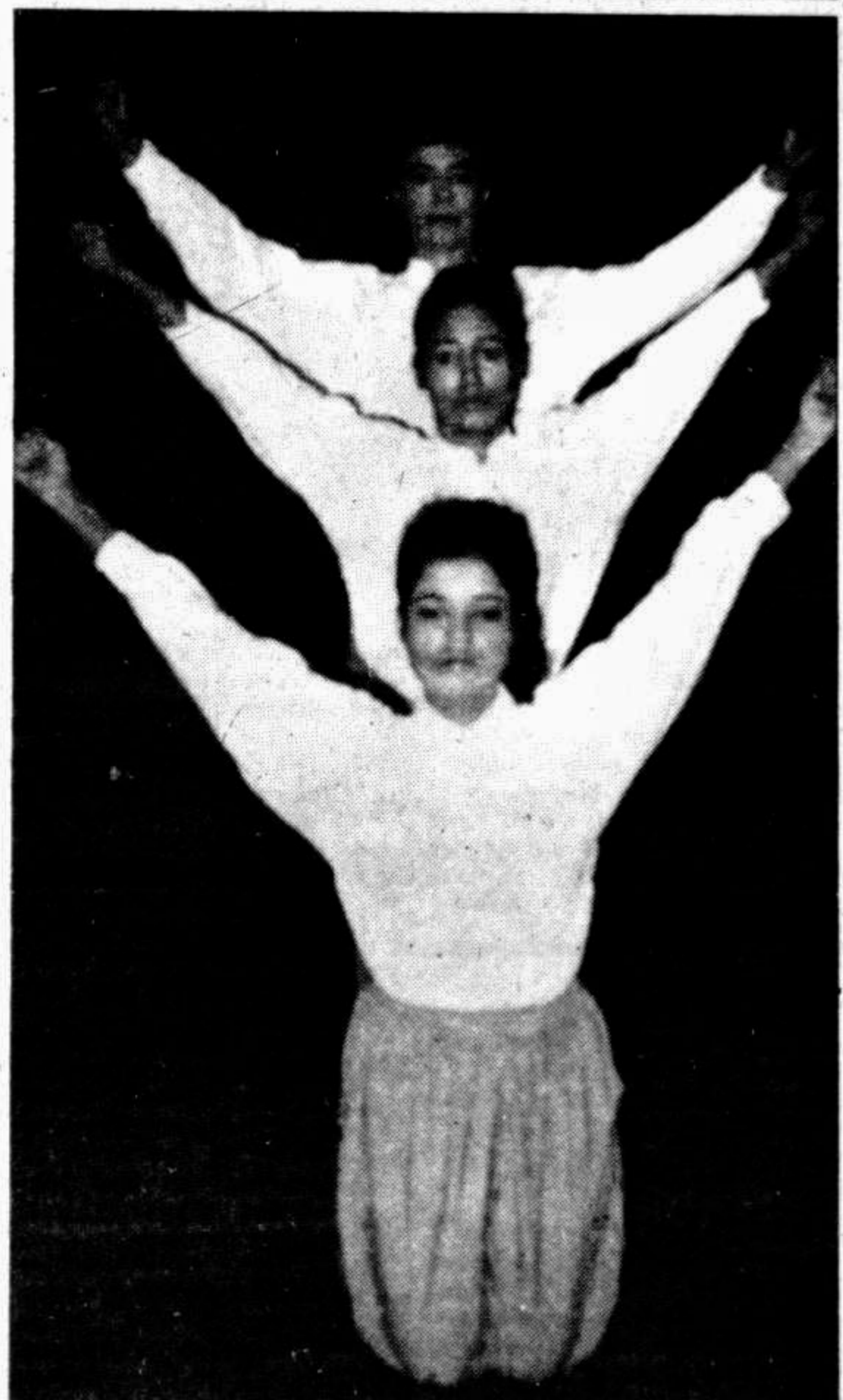
Witnesses said, the MSC fans attacked their rivals in the stadium with sticks and pelted stones at them. They then moved towards the PDB rest house, ransacked it, and damaged it property including a jeep and three motorcycles.

PDB officials claimed that the property damaged by the attackers was worth Taka 10 lakh.

Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Project WB decision by year end

Star Economic Report

The World Bank is now considering the key issue of economic justification of the proposed Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge Project. By the end of the current year, the



BODY LANGUAGE: Dhaka Pantomime on stage at the Shikpala Academy on the first day of the first mime festival, organised by the academy, yesterday. — Star photo

Bank will be able to take decision on the issue after appraisal of the whole situation.

This was stated by the visiting World Bank Director Jochen Karaske at a press conference at the Bank's resident mission in Bangladesh. Resident mission chief Christopher Willoughby was also present at the press briefing on Thursday evening.

Karaske said a mission from the World Bank headquarters visited Bangladesh in connection with the economic appraisal of the project. At the outset, the Bank was concerned over the issue whether Bangladesh government would be able to afford such a huge investment in a single project. But the government prepared a forward looking programme for the project, the key issue is now to see the economic justification of the project, Karaske said.

Giving an outline of his six-day visit to Bangladesh, Karaske said he had endorsed the statement of the Finance Minister Saifur Rahman on government priorities and objectives.

Praising the government's market-based approaches and private initiatives to boost the state economy, Karaske said he was happy to see the return of democracy to Bangladesh.

Democracy is one of the pre-requisites for successful economic development, Karaske was quoted as saying.

He said that he had held talks with the ministers and government officials and private sector representatives and felt that Bangladesh had potentials to grow significantly faster.

The country has enough advantage in the world market for its cheap and adequate labour force. This potential has to be explored properly, he said.

See Page 12 Col. 7

BCL armed raid on BIT hostel: 7 held

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 24: A group of armed students reportedly belonging to the Awami League-backed Chhatra League (S-A) attacked a hostel of Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT) here in the small hours of today.

The BCL (S-A) attackers fired several rounds of gunshot and blasted bombs in an abortive bid to occupy the BIT hostel, dominated by the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) members, Institute sources said.

Police rushed the spot and held seven BCL (S-A) workers in this connection.

Later the BIT teachers decided to boycott academic functions indefinitely from today in protest against the attack. They have also demanded probe into the incident and punishment to the persons responsible.

Press Note

BSS adds: The Ministry of Home Affairs in a press note yesterday said: "A group of 80/90 Chhatra League workers under the leadership of Chittagong District (North) Chhatra League Secretary Debashish launched an attack on the Chhatra Dal at Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT) at Raosan and opened indiscriminate fire and hurled bombs at 2.30 on the night of October 23, 1991. The local administration and police took preparations to thwart the attack after receiving secret information. Police fired five blank shots during

the incident and arrested seven persons including Chhatra League leader Debashish. Of the arrested persons, three are students of BIT and the four others are outsiders. A pipe gun, a Chinese axe and some bullets were recovered from the arrested persons. A case has been filed with Raosan thana in this connection.

A delegation of teachers and employees headed by the BIT Director met the Divisional Commissioner at 2 pm on October 24, 1991 and placed a demand to keep the institution free from terrorism.

The Divisional Commissioner, reiterating the government's determination to quell terrorism, assured them of all-out administrative measures to check campus violence. The Divisional Commissioner called upon the teachers not to encourage terrorism on the campus.

The government hoped that people from all walks of life will extend necessary help and cooperation to resist violence in the educational institutions."

BSC ship detained at Belgian port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 24: A ship of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) has been

See Page 12 Col. 5

Special committee on repealing Indemnity Ordinance meets

The parliamentary special committee on repealing Indemnity Ordinance held a meeting Thursday in the room of Jatiya Sangsad's Permanent Committee Number 1 with Law Minister Mirza Golam Haifz in the chair, reports BSS.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Abdus Samad Azad, Opposition Whip Mohammad Nasim, Sudhangsu Sekhar Haider and Sheikh Ansar Ali, among others, attended the meeting from opposition side.

The Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Resources, Majedul Haq, Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Chief Whip Khandakar Dewar Hossain and State Minister for Law Aminul Haq attended the meeting from the Treasury Bench.

NBR has power to re-examine doubtful income tax cases

Star Economic Report
 The National Board of Revenue (NBR) said on Thursday that it had the power to re-examine the cases of income tax which had created doubt.

In a clarification to reports published in a section of the press, NBR said, it was witnessed that fixation of income tax was not made in a lawful manner and a huge sum of money was turned into capital on self-liquidation basis or by taking advantage of the Gift Tax Act. These cases will be re-examined but no steps will be taken without proper scrutiny, NBR said.

In amending the Tax Act, NBR was not imposing retrospective effect and reopening the settled cases, the clarification said.

On the complaints of ignoring the verdicts of the Taxes Appellate Tribunal, NBR said appeals could be lodged with the Supreme Court Appellate Division against the verdicts of the Taxes Appellate Tribunal and High Court Division of the Supreme Court. Even the verdict of the Supreme Court Appellate Division can be placed for 'review' of the Supreme Court by the Taxes Department. This does not suggest that the court verdicts were dishonoured, NBR maintained.

Arabs pledge common stand at Madrid conference

DAMASCUS, Oct 24: Arab states pledged today to maintain a common stand at all stages of their historic Middle East peace talks with Israel and called for an immediate halt to Israeli settlement in the occupied territories, reports agencies.

Arab foreign ministers, winding up a two days of consultations in Damascus, mapped out their main aims and agreed to hold further meetings to review talks held by any of the Arab delegations with Israel at next week's Madrid peace conference or afterwards.

The main aims are to ensure Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem; to halt Israeli settlement immediately and to ensure the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people," the ministers said in a statement.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Shara, whose country is Israel's most resolute Arab foe, read the statement to reporters.

Coordination is vital for the Arabs because the main delegations at the Madrid conference, which opens on Wednesday, will play Israeli

negotiators separately on the key issues — peace and borders.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation, which is barred from attending the talks, is specially anxious to ensure that Israel does not make separate deals with any of its Arab neighbours while stonewalling on the central question — the future of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sixteen Arab states were represented directly or indirectly at the Damascus meeting. They included all those that will go to Madrid plus the PLO, which will play a backstage role in directing Palestinians attending the conference in a joint delegation with Jordan.

The talks began with a meeting between the PLO, to which Israel refuses to talk, and the four Arab countries which border the Jewish state. They were joined on Wednesday evening by the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia and Morocco representing six Gulf and five North African states.

The statement did not make clear whether the other Arab participants would go along with Syria's wish to delay multilateral talks on secondary issues, such as arms control and water rights, until Israel yielded on the central question of land.

Syria is demanding return of the Golan Heights seized in the 1967 Middle East war along with Arab, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

There was no reference to a prepeace conference summit meeting, which Syria and the PLO sought last weekend.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir decided to head Israel's delegation to the Madrid peace talks because he wanted to present the strongest possible front against the Arabs, a Shamir aide said Thursday.

Foreign Minister David Levy, who was pushed aside by Shamir in a surprise move Wednesday, has a more conciliatory approach to Middle East peace issues than the hawkish Shamir.