

# Arafat rejects Clinton's call to resume ME talks

TUNIS, Mar 17: PLO chairman Yasser Arafat rejected President Clinton's call to resume peace talks with Israel on Thursday, insisting that the United Nations first endorse international protection of Palestinians, reports AP.

Arafat spoke after a meeting with Vatican envoy Jean Louis Tauran at the Palestine Liberation Organisation headquarters.

Arab-Israeli peace talks were suspended after a Jewish settler massacred 30 Palestinian worshippers at a Hebron mosque February 25.

After a meeting at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Wednesday, Clinton called on Arafat to return to the negotiating table to prevent extremists from scuttling the peace process.

But Arafat told reporters: "What is required now is that the United States, the two cosponsors of the Middle East peace process and the Security Council respond to the just demands of the Palestinians to provide international protection to our children, our women and our holy places."

The United States has blocked passage of a Security Council resolution on the Hebron massacre to put pres-

sure on the Palestine Liberation Organisation to renew peace talks.

Arafat also has demanded that Jewish settlements in Palestinian population centers be dismantled and settlers elsewhere disarmed.

Israel has rejected Arafat's demands, saying they infringed on the September 13 autonomy accord which stipulated that the future of the settlements will be discussed after the transitional, five-year period of Palestinian self-rule starts in the occupied town of Jericho and the Gaza Strip.

Arafat met with Tauran and Rabin met with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican on Thursday. Rabin asked the pontiff's support to get the peace process "back on track" and pledged every effort to bring peace to the Holy Land.

The Vatican has stepped up its Middle East diplomacy since agreeing in December to establish diplomatic ties with Israel, and Tauran told reporters that he came to Tunis with a strong message from the Pope to Arafat in support of the peace process.

"All the faithful believe that peace is within reach... and we should work toward that end," Tauran said.



Two Israeli soldiers grab a Palestinian after he was arrested during clashes with the army and young Palestinians in the Jabalia refugee camp, north of Gaza Wednesday. — AFP photo

## Israeli soldiers admit shooting at mosque

JERUSALEM, Mar 17: Soldiers testified Thursday that they fired at the entrance of a West Bank mosque where a Jewish settler killed 30 Muslim worshippers, and suggested a second settler carried the murder weapon into the mosque, reports AP.

Palestinian witnesses to the February 25 massacre have said the gunman, Dr Baruch Goldstein, did not act alone.

Palestinian witnesses also have said at least one worshiper was killed and others wounded by army gunfire after the massacre. Palestinians are boycotting the Israeli panel investigating the shootings, saying it will not be impartial.

Sgt Kobi Yosef, one of the guards at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, said Goldstein carried an M-16 assault rifle when he walked past the guard post at about 5:20 am on February 25. The 110 spent shells in the Ibrahim Mosque were fired from a Gali, a different type of rifle.

Chief Justice Meir Shamgar, leader of the commission, asked Yosef whether he was sure about the type of weapon, noting that other soldiers had testified Goldstein carried a Gali.

## Israeli jets raid Hezbollah bases

NABATIYEH, Lebanon, Mar 17: Israeli warplanes blasted guerrilla positions in south Lebanon on Thursday after killing three infiltrators in an overnight shootout, security sources said, reports AP.

In two consecutive sorties, two Israeli fighter-bombers fired four rockets into Milta, hill in Iqim Al-Tuffah, north of the Israeli-occupied border enclave, said the sources, who requested anonymity.

Clouds of black smoke were seen billowing from the targeted hill, a stronghold of the Iranian-backed Shi'ite Muslim Hezbollah, or Party of God.

There was no immediate word of casualties.

An Israeli army statement said Israeli warplanes attacked Hezbollah bases in south Lebanon used for training and to launch attacks against Israeli targets.

## Teller machine

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The machine will go into operation experimentally from tomorrow and if found suitable, the bank would place orders for import of more machines for the purpose.

Agrani Bank sources said that the automatic teller machines would enable customers to withdraw and deposit cash at any time. However, the bank would initially programme the machines for cash withdrawal only so as to avoid deposit of counterfeit notes.

## Indian police kill 7 communists

NEW DELHI, Mar 17: Police shot and killed seven Communist activists and wounded four in eastern India on Thursday when they tried to prevent the arrest of several of their comrades, reports AP.

The victims were members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and the Indian People's Front, two news agencies quoted the police as saying.

Communists in Bihar state campaign against upper-caste landowners, who they accuse of exploiting poor villagers by forcing them to work on their farms and taking away their land.

Police arrived in Narigan village Thursday to arrest Communist activists accused of killing a powerful landlord and attacking a friend who is a member of the governing Congress Party.

## Serbs, Muslims agree to end siege of Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Mar 17: Serbs and Muslims signed an agreement Thursday to open roads to civilian traffic in and out of Sarajevo, effectively ending the 23-month siege of the capital, reports AP.

The agreement takes effect Wednesday.

The deal, signed at Sarajevo airport under UN supervision, opens up a bridge and key roads linking ethnic Serb and Muslim sections of the city. It also frees a route from Sarajevo into central Bosnia, controlled by allied Muslims and Croats.

Though the agreement does not permit commercial or military traffic on the road leading from Sarajevo to Visoko and on to Zenica in central Bosnia, it envisages free passage of civilians in buses or cars under UN escort.

The agreement was the latest and perhaps most dramatic sign that the Bosnian war is winding down after 23 months of carnage that has left more than 200,000 people dead or missing.

It follows the Serb withdrawal of heavy guns from the immediate vicinity of the Bosnian capital and a tentative agreement between Bosnian Croats and Muslims to stop fighting, reform their alliance and create a federation.

The successes reflect increased outside pressure on the warring parties, including an active US and Russian role in mediating agreements. But it also appears to be recognition by all sides that little more is to be gained by fighting, either politically or territorially.

Hasan Muratovic, the Bosnian Liaison to the United Nations, signed for the government and Momcilo Krajsnik, chief of the Bosnian Serb Parliament, signed for the ethnic Serbs.

## 3 die in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Three persons, including a minor girl, died in separate incidents in the capital yesterday.

An eight-year-old girl, Husna Ara, was killed when she was run over by an auto-rickshaw at Kaila under Demra police station in the afternoon.

Fatally wounded, Husna Ara was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared her dead.

Witnesses said that the girl was run over by an auto-rickshaw while she was crossing the road. She was a student of class three.

Demra police seized the auto-rickshaw but its driver managed to escape.

Pollobi and Mohammadpur police recovered two bodies from their respective areas in the morning.

A 35-year-old woman was found dead in a slum at Pollobi while the body of a man, aged 50, was found near a mosque at Sher Shah Suri Road, Mohammadpur. None of them could be identified immediately.

The bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue and two separate unnatural death (UD) cases were lodged with police.

## Sagir

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der Muminigahj district on March 12, was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after the end of police-remand.

Police said that Gaaym made a confessional statement under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) before a magistrate in Dhaka yesterday.

pointed out that the economic reform measures continue to face 'formidable' resistance from the Bangladesh government, although some civil servants and ministers receive good marks from the private sector for their 'integrity and receptivity' to the reform programme.

When his attention was drawn to the growing interest of US investors in India and Vietnam in recent years, O'Hanian pointed out that businessmen essentially would look for opportunities to make money.

Acknowledging that the Bangladesh government was acting to create a congenial investment climate he, however, stated that the international investors first want to see if the local investors feel confident and are investing money. If they do and make money, he added, then certainly foreign investors would come.

On this issue, the report noted that the domestic private investors, who invest nearly all of what private investment is made, regard the

## Public holiday in Magura Mar 20

By Staff Correspondent

The government in a hand-out yesterday declared March 20 a public holiday in the areas comprising the Magura-2 constituency. The decision has been taken to facilitate the people to cast their votes in the by-elections.

The government has directed the government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous organisations, commercial organisations, mills and factories in the constituency to remain closed on the day.

The government also expressed the hope that those organisations which are run independently will also declare a holiday on the day to facilitate the staff to cast votes.

## AL complaint

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Samad Azad yesterday urged international community, donors and national and international press to see how the ruling party 'is violating election rules' in Magura-2 parliamentary by-election.

In a statement, he charged BNP ministers with gross interference in the conduct of free and impartial election by misusing power and the administration to manipulate votes for the ruling party candidate.

Azad alleged most of the senior ministers, abandoning their offices and assigned jobs in Dhaka, have been staying in Magura for last one week intimidating or tempting voters through administration to cast ballot for the BNP candidate.

"All arrangements have been made by the government to stage a mock election in Magura-2 seat on March 20", Azad said, adding election under BNP will never be free and fair.

## Campaigning

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Hasina is scheduled to come to Magura again from Tungipara and is expected to stay there until the polling day.

The two top political parties — BNP and AL — are attaching top priority to the Magura by-polls. They have been making all-out efforts to help their candidates win the election. Both parties are considering the election as a prestige fight after the recent mayoral polls' results.

The Magura seat had been held by the AL for the last three decades. Therefore, the AL is confident of retaining it and accordingly the party chief, a host of MPs and other senior leaders have been campaigning ceaselessly for their nominee, Shafiguzzaman Bachchu, the son of the deceased Asaduzzaman.

On the other hand, the BNP, shaken by its debacle in the mayoral elections in Dhaka and Chittagong, has been desperately striving to improve its image by winning the Magura seat. Cabinet ministers accompanied by a large number of MPs, have been touring different parts of the constituency.

According to EC sources, Chief Election Commissioner Justice A Rouf is expected to be present in Magura to oversee the conduct of the election.

Meanwhile, some observers from a few foreign embassies may also go to Magura to monitor the polls.

Our Jessore Correspondent says: Door-to-door campaigning is continuing with the by-election date approaching nearer.

## 4-day hartal begins at Meherpur

MEHERPUR, Mar 17: Residents of the town set ablaze the house and car of a former police officer during a hartal to protest the arrest of four management committee members of the local Eidgah today, witnesses said, reports UNB.

Hamid Khan, a former police super of the district, filed a case against them for damaging the boundary wall he had erected around the Meherpur Eidgah in the town claiming that he owned the land.

Hundreds of people demolished the wall on the Eid day on Monday and offered their Eid prayers there. According to them, the land was earmarked as Eidgah by the Royal Survey (RS) of 1927.

The local people enforced the four-day hartal from 9 am today demanding the release of committee members Khademul Islam, Ataul Haki Lal Mia, Abdur Razaque and Tariqul Islam, who were arrested earlier in the day.

All political parties, including the BNP, Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat, extended their support to the hartal call. Activists of the parties also joined a big procession brought out during the hartal.

The committee members were later released on bail.

## The Midnight File

### Fire at Ukrainian N-plant

KIEV, (Ukraine), Mar 17: A nuclear reactor was shut down in a powerplant in central Ukraine after fire broke out in the turbine room, an official said on Thursday. An electric cable caught fire in the turbine room of Khmelintsky nuclear power plant, 250 kilometers (156 miles) west of Kiev, Nuclear Safety Committee spokesman Nikolai Kurlichuk said. The duty operator immediately spotted the fire, which began at 20.45 local time (18.45 GMT) on Wednesday, and two minutes later shut down the power plant's single water pressurised reactor, reports AP.

### Rabin seeks Pope's support in ME peace process

VATICAN CITY, Mar 17: Yitzhak Rabin asked Pope John Paul II to help get the Middle East peace process "back on track" on Thursday and pledged every effort to bring peace to the Holy Land. In a 30-minute Vatican audience, the Israeli prime minister called the February 25 mosque massacre by a Jewish extremist "shameful", a Vatican spokesman said, reports AP.

## Cabinet reshuffle

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in the Dhaka and Chittagong mayoral polls, party cadres have been mounting pressure on the leadership to take drastic steps to face future political challenges.

According to party sources, the BNP High Command is much concerned about the situation and also aware of the feelings of the party workers. BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and other policymakers have been exchanging views on the future course of action.

"We expect soon a new central committee which is likely to be accompanied by a cabinet reshuffle," said a central leader of the BNP requesting anonymity.

After the BNP's national council was held in September last year, a standing committee and the new central committee are yet to be formed. The BNP constitution empowers the party chief to appoint the office-bearers and members of the central committee.

The appointment of a new Secretary General replacing Abus Salam Talukder is a major issue of discussion inside the party.

According to sources, Salam Talukder is reluctant to continue, citing health grounds. To replace him, some names are being considered by the party high command. The possible choices for the post still remain confined to four names as of now — Tariqul Islam, Rafiqul Islam Mia, Abdul Manhan Bhuiyan and Dr Khondker Mosharrak Hossain, all ministers.

A S M Mostafizur Rahman and Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury are also reportedly being considered for this vital post. However, as both of them had previously served as Secretary General, they are not much interested in this post.

In any cabinet reshuffle, Abdul Matin Chowdhury is most likely to lose, the Home Ministry, if Matin Chowdhury is transferred to another minister.

## AIDS directorate

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clinical symptom and complaint.

There might be many more cases of HIV positive which could not be detected due to lack of extensive surveillance and sufficient blood screening mechanism in the country, he added.

Former chairman of National AIDS Committee Prof SGM Chowdhury carried out surveys in the brothels of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Bani Shata, Jessore and Bagerhat as well as among floating masses, gay girls, truck drivers and sailors in 1989 but did not find any positive case of HIV.

Doctors and experts of IEDCR however detected seven positive cases in the brothels of Goaland in last January and another in Bani Shata in the country's second largest port city of Khulna. But surveys carried out at the English Road brothel of the capital could trace no positive case of HIV.

Based on the findings, experts hinted that the virus may have been carried by truck drivers making a stopover at Goaland while on their way back from the border.

They said two groups of people in the country are very vulnerable — the business group making frequent trips to high-prevalence HIV areas like Bangkok and the prostitutes who are coming in contact with them. AIDS is also known as a "traveller's disease".

The campaign to check the spread of the killer disease in the country which include telecasting of a message against AIDS only once a week on the television has so far been very ineffective. Aggressive advertisements cannot be used due to the conservative and religious faith of the people.

Sources, however said authorities are trying to make an appealing advertisement with famous TV characters in the lead role as part of a comprehensive AIDS prevention and control programme and for active promotion of condoms which is an effective safeguard.

istry, then Mostafizur Rahman may be appointed Home Minister. Mostafizur Rahman, the incumbent Foreign Minister, ran the Home Ministry under Ziaur Rahman and for some time under Justice Abdus Sattar.

In such case, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury may become the new foreign minister. On the other hand, Jute Minister Hannan Shah could also be appointed Home Minister. Changes in the portfolios of some other ministers and state ministers are also expected, said the sources.

Some party insiders expect that decisions regarding the party leadership and the cabinet would be taken by the Prime Minister before she leaves for Tokyo on March 28 on a four-day state visit. However, others expect the changes after the PM's return.

## Hasina

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the people in order to fulfil the hopes of the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sheikh Hasina accused the BNP of not fulfilling its pledge to cancel the Indemnity Ordinance. "This is a serious breach of commitment," she alleged.

"The BNP government is responsible for killings, terrorism and corruption. The government has no right to stay in power," Sheikh Hasina said.

The function was presided over by poet Shamsur Rahman, Joint Convener of the Bengali 1400 Celebration Council.

Others who participated in the discussion were AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, presidium member Amir Husain Amu, film actress Kabori Sarwar, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, MP, and Gazdul Huq.

The Bengali 1400 Celebration Council also organised day-long programmes at the mazar premises of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of his birth anniversary. The programme included recitation from the Holy Quran, milad mahfil, discussion, and a children's rally.

Earlier, at sunrise, the Awami League chief, along with party leaders and workers placed wreaths at the grave of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

## Vested quarters: PM

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unitedly for progress and prosperity of the country. "Every individual has to be integrated in the development programmes for their success."

Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister Maj Gen (Retd) Majid ul-Huq, T & T Minister Tariqul Islam, Khulna City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Taysur Rahman and a number of MPs also accompanied the Prime Minister during the campaign.

## SAARC Press Clubs confce: Pak team arrives

A seven-member Pakistan delegation to South Asian Press Clubs' conference arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon, reports BSS.

They were received at the Zia International Airport by the National Press Club President, Hasan Shahriar, General Secretary, Shukat Mahmood, senior members of the club managing committee and officials of the Pakistan High Commission.

The two-day conference will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the Osmany Memorial Hall tomorrow morning.

Participants from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, Bhutan and the Secretary General of SAARC, YK Silwal, will arrive today.

The Pakistan delegation comprises Hasan Abid, President, Karachi Press Club, Huma Ali, President, Lahore Press Club, Mohammad Nawaz Raza, President, Rawalpindi Press Club, Maqbool Kashmiri, President, Peshawar Press Club, M Ziauddin, Editor, The News, Rawalpindi, Razia Bhat, Editor, The Newline, Karachi and Anwar Mansuri, DPA Bureau Chief, Islamabad.

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