

## Israeli, 4 Palestinians killed in violence

JERUSALEM, Dec 22: Violence exploded across the West Bank and Gaza Strip today, leaving five people dead, including an Israeli woman killed in a suicide bomb attack at a restaurant that left seven others hurt, including two seriously, reports AFP.

Four Palestinians, including the suicide attacker, also died in clashes with Israelis Friday, declared a "day of rage" by Palestinian militant groups.

The suicide attacker exploded a bomb, apparently strapped around his waist, at a restaurant often frequented by Israeli soldiers near the Jewish settlement of Meholah in the northern West Bank, Israeli medical officials and media reports said.

The identities of those involved were not immediately known.

Also Friday, a Palestinian farm worker was killed during a gunfight between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians at the Nezarim Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. Both sides blamed the other for his death.

A Jewish settler further shot dead a Palestinian disguised as an Israeli policeman who attacked him with a knife at a settlement in the southern West Bank Friday, an Israeli army spokesman said.

The Palestinian had made his way into the Beit Haggal settlement near Hebron in the southern West Bank and tried to stab the settler, who managed to fire his pistol at the attacker.

The dead man was not immediately identified, and his body was taken into custody by the Israeli army, a military spokesman said.

Israeli soldiers also shot and killed a Palestinian teenager Friday during clashes near Hebron, hospital officials said.

Medical officials said Arafat Mishaal, 17, died in hospital after Israeli soldiers shot him in the

head with a live round in clashes on a road used by Jewish settlers near the Arab village of Silir near Hebron.

Friday's deaths brought number of people killed since violence erupted in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel on September 28 to 356, the vast majority being Palestinians.

Hospital officials in Gaza City identified the dead farm worker as Sallama Eish al-Sawarka, 52.

The Israeli army said al-Sawarka had been working in a field on the outskirts of the Nezarim south of Gaza City and was killed by Palestinian gunfire.

Palestinian security officials, however, said that he was shot by Israeli soldiers.

Seven other Palestinians were shot in clashes with Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers near the Kafr Darom Jewish settlement in central Gaza, medical officials said.

The fighting there broke out after settlers tried to bulldoze a strip of Palestinian-owned farmland.

In other violence on Friday, at least 14 Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers as thousands held demonstrations to commemorate Jerusalem Day and denounce peace talks with Israel.

In the West Bank town of Ramallah, Israelis fired live ammunition and rubber-coated steel bullets at Palestinians who threw stones at them at a checkpoint on the outskirts of the Palestinian-run city, medical officials said.

Of the 14 Palestinians injured there, officials said four of them were hit by live rounds.

### BNP

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The Standing Committee meeting was held at a time when top BNP leaders are divided on whether the opposition would spend its energy to force the government to resign or start preparing for the next general election under the cover of an anti-government movement.

Besides, controversy is still there among the alliance partners on the questions of agitation and preparations for the election.

Liaison Committee of the alliance has meantime formed a sub-committee to chalk out fresh agitation programmes. It is due to submit its suggestions at the December 24 meeting of the Liaison Committee.

Opposition sources said, chances are bleak for the opposition lawmakers' return to the Jatiya Sangsad that goes into winter session on January 11, although there is mounting pressure from within.

Their long-pending decision to resign from parliament is also being discussed in the rank and file of the opposition parties. But the Opposition Leader is learnt to be unwilling to end the nearly two years' boycott of parliamentary proceedings.

### Hemayet

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among the city dwellers, particularly residents on the Dhaka University campus.

Failure of police to arrest him has now raised questions among various quarters.

Meanwhile, Dhaka University authorities expelled Hemayet after an inquiry committee found him involved in the untoward incident.

He was also expelled in the past for his involvement in violence at Ziaur Rahman Hall. He is also involved in various criminal activities on the campus, sources said.



A Calcutta schoolboy looks at a Santa cut-out he bought at a market yesterday. Though India's population counts only 2 per cent of Christians, most stores have adopted Christmas decorations and specials to boost sales. -AFP photo

## Jail siege ends in Turkey : 26 dead

ANKARA, Dec 22: Turkish soldiers bombarded rioting prisoners with tear gas today and forced hundreds of inmates to surrender, ending a four-day jail siege that left at least 24 prisoners and two soldiers dead, reports AP.

The riots began earlier this week when 5,000 soldiers stormed 20 prisons across the nation to end a two-month hunger strike by leftist inmates protesting plans to move them from open wards to individual cells that prisoners say make them more vulnerable to abuses from authorities.

Soldiers cut holes into the roof of the last prison holding out today, and lobbed inside so many tear gas grenades that at least 18 ambulances had to evacuate soldiers and inmates suffering

from tear gas inhalation. About 430 inmates of the Istanbul prison surrendered.

Also today, the bodies of three inmates were discovered and three others were killed in clashes, raising the death toll from the prison siege to 24 prisoners and two soldiers, the government said.

Prisoners' support group Ozgur Tayad said the death toll was much higher but gave no figures.

Many inmates set themselves ablaze and burned to death rather than surrender. At least five of the bodies bore gunshot wounds, an autopsy report revealed.

Turkish prisons are overcrowded and prisoners often live in open wards that house up to 100 people. Left-wing, Kurdish

and Islamic groups control many of the wards, and use the cellblocks many bedecked with wall murals of political figures and flags to indoctrinate new followers.

Soldiers had been lobbing tear gas canisters into Istanbul's Umraniye prison for four days but they apparently increased their attack today. Some inmates were reportedly wearing makeshift gas masks.

Hundreds of soldiers surrounded Umraniye prison, and during the night, smoke billowed from it as inmates inside set fire to mattresses and blankets, resisting calls to surrender until the government assault today.

A day earlier, inmates promised to fight until "death or victory."

## Govt to launch AIDS project

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drug users are Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) positive. Among commercial sex workers, the rate is equally high.

Transmission of the disease from blood and blood components is the second most common way in which HIV spreads. In Bangladesh about 80 per cent of all blood donors in hospitals and private clinics are professional. Most of them are intravenous drug users.

Unfortunately, the government is struggling to implement the nearly three million dollar "safe blood transfusion programme" across 97 centres in the country. The National AIDS Committee, too, is a total disappointment, experts working within the committee said.

On evaluation of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh, Kang said, "In the early stages of the project the World Bank assessed the

HIV/AIDS situation in the country. As of now our assessment says it is still in the early stages of HIV. It's not an epidemic yet. If the government moves quickly, as it is planning to do, there is every possibility that Bangladesh will be able to address the problems before it becomes serious."

"What we are aiming at is to stop spreading of the disease among the general population since we already know that HIV exists in the high-risk groups. What we worry about is the behaviour pattern of the high-risk groups. For instance, recent surveys showed that there has been a definite rise in the number of brothel going young men and the use of condoms is still very low," said an NGO official working with the HIV patients.

Since HIV is primarily associated with high-risk behaviour, bringing about changes in individual's conduct can go a long

way in preventing the disease. All educational programmes must, therefore, stress on this aspect, experts talking to this correspondent said.

The project was prepared in a very co-operative way where the UNAIDS assisted the World Bank by providing technical assistance and also helped the Bangladesh government.

Commercial sex workers, intravenous drug users and other high-risk groups were consulted before preparing the project.

Dr Uton Muchtar Rafel, World Health Organisation's South East Asia's Regional Director in his message on AIDS Challenge said, "HIV which causes AIDS knows no bounds. No one is immune. All countries and communities are vulnerable. It has been demonstrated that high level of commitment and sustained efforts can prevent the spread of HIV and minimise its future impact."

## Sonia weathers storm over Bofors scandal

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Quattrocchi, who was released on bail shortly after his arrest by Malaysian police on Wednesday, is charged in India with accepting money from the Swedish arms firm Bofors to clinch a howitzer deal 14 years ago.

The scandal ultimately led to the defeat of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party in general elections in 1999.

From the Bofors documents released by the authorities, prima facie, there is evidence against the London-based Hinduja business family and some against Quattrocchi, said Bidwai.

"Nothing in those papers suggest Sonia and her husband Rajiv got rich on Bofors kickbacks."

Biographer and political analyst Rita Pannikar said Sonia was being "targeted" because Prime

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's government was miffed at opposition attempts last week to bring down three ministers implicated in the razing of a mosque by Hindu zealots in 1992.

"The Congress embarrassed Vajpayee for betraying the secular credentials of the country. Now the BJP is desperate to come up with something to bring Sonia down by a notch or two," Pannikar said.

Sonia Gandhi responded quickly to the BJP attacks.

"Let the government continue with its investigations. The law will take its own course," she told reporters Thursday at her party headquarters.

The opposition leader rejected charges she, or any member of her family, was involved in the Bofors kickbacks scandal and

asked the BJP government to back the allegations with evidence.

"Let the government come out with proof of involvement of my family," she said.

Vajpayee's government, while speeding up its moves to have the high-flying Italian tycoon extradited to face trial in India, has denied suggestions the efforts were being fuelled by domestic politics.

Indian authorities allege Quattrocchi was the conduit of Bofors bribes deposited into secret Swiss bank accounts held by Rajiv Gandhi's then Cabinet colleagues and close associates.

Quattrocchi, following his arrest and release, asserted the efforts to extradite him to India were linked to his close association with the Gandhi family.

## Autorickshaw driver shot dead in Laxmipur

LUXMIPUR, Dec 22: An autorickshaw driver was shot dead by miscreants in Battali area on the Battali-Dullapara road early this morning, reports BSS.

Police said the driver, Harunur Rashid, 32, came under attack near the Battali autorickshaw stand at about 4 am when he along with a passenger was passing the area.

Police recovered the body and sent it to the morgue of Luxmipur Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

A case was registered with Sadar thana, but none was arrested in connection with the killing.

## Police yet to recover rifles in Satkania

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 22: Police are yet to recover the rifles looted from three constables by the terrorists at Satkania on Wednesday, police sources said.

Police began a hunt for the terrorists to recover the rifles soon after the incident.

Police sources said none was arrested in this connection despite a drive for the third day today.

The armed terrorists opened fire on the patrol police at Aochia in Satkania and looted three rifles from three policemen. The policemen received bullet wounds during the attack and were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

## ZIA customs

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unloaders," said the senior ZIA official.

The surge also created unprecedented jams in and around the parking lot affecting the highway passing by the ZIA. "Nothing was moving for hours," said Nayeem Ahmed who went to receive his friend.

Many passengers alleged that the "organised groups" at the airport took the opportunity of the situation and harassed them and compelled them to give money to hoodlums.

Airport officials said Gulf Air landed at the ZIA at 8:10 am, followed by BG-Jeddah at 8:18 am, Qatar Airlines at 8:49 am, EK-612 at 8:54 am, Kuwait Airways at 8:59 am, BG-040-Riyadh at 9:47 am and BG-008-London-Rome at 9:49 am.

One hour later at 10:59 am, an aircraft of Saudia landed at the ZIA. The rush was still on when a flight of Thai Airlines flew in at 12:24 pm.

## Khulna city BNP

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Supporters of both factions who were found ready to face against each other in case of necessity were not allowed to enter the city BNP office during the closed-door meeting.

Insiders said that hot words were exchanged several times between members of the working committee belonging to both factions.

But tension was diffused when Shaikh Razzak Ali intervened calling for unity and discipline in the party.

Mayor Tabeur Rahman was absent from the meeting as he had to attend a milad mahfil at his village home in Bagerhat district on the occasion of the death anniversary of his father Shaikh Matiu Rahman.

## Convention

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chemical and environmental and disaster management.

Three groups of entrepreneurs, investors and technologists would work separately at the convention.

The convention would hear technology transfer proposals by technologists, scientists and engineers and witness presentation of entrepreneurial projects; transferable technology presentation and display by companies; entrepreneurs' workshop; technology workshop; technologist-investor-entrepreneur interaction and technology policy forum.

## RIP

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The Council had identified six rivers in Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts, three in Sylhet and 10 others in Jamalpur, Dinajpur and Rangpur districts for setting up of the proposed 19 plants.

Meanwhile, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Water Resources has strongly recommended revival of the RIP, sources concerned said.

The recommendation followed a visit by a team of the JS body to some hydro-electricity units in India, the sources said.

## Launches

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On the other hand, many of the vessels were not adequately equipped with safety instruments, sources said. Plying of vessels with flawed engines and forged documents is also common on such occasions as 'idle' ones are pressed into service, the sources said.

BLOA sources had said earlier that they would provide additional launches during the Eid.

## Bush names Ashcroft as attorney general

AUSTIN, Texas, Dec 22: President-elect George W. Bush today named outgoing Missouri Senator John Ashcroft as his choice for attorney general in his new administration, reports AFP.

"John Ashcroft will perform his duties guided by principle, not by politics," Bush told a press conference here.

"He will be faithful to the law, pursuing justice without favour. He will enforce the law and he will follow the truth."

Ashcroft, 58, a former governor and attorney general for Missouri, lost his Senate seat in November 7 elections after serving one term in Washington.

"President-elect Bush, you have my word that I will administer the Department of Justice with integrity, I will advise your administration with integrity, and I will enforce the laws of the United States of America with integrity," he said.

Ashcroft was defeated in his Senate re-election battle by Democrat Mel Carnahan, who died in a plane crash before the vote but whose name remained on the ballot. Carnahan's widow Jean Carnahan, will fill the Missouri seat.

Ashcroft is Bush's fifth cabinet nominee. The president-elect has named Alcoa aluminium chief Paul O'Neill as treasury secretary; California lawyer Ann Veneman as agriculture secretary.

Bush campaign manager Don Evans as commerce secretary; and Cuban immigrant Mel Martinez as housing and urban development secretary.

Ashcroft was governor of Missouri from 1985 to 1993 after serving as attorney general for a decade from 1975.

He is married to law professor Janet Ashcroft with whom he has three children.

## 5 killed as bus, truck collide in Bogra

BOGRA, Dec 22: A collision between a bus and a truck on the Bogra-Nagarbari highway today left five people dead and 30 injured, reports UNB.

Police said the accident took place when a truck collided with a Nagarbari-bound bus at Chhonka in Sherpur upazila at about 2 pm.

The truck driver identified as Shahidul Islam, 40, of Sarkarpara in sadar upazila died at hospital at 4 pm while the four others on the spot.

Seven of the injured, identified as Rima, Abdul Latif, Rajab Ali, Jamal, Ashok, Anwara and Ruhul Amin were admitted to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital while the others to local health complex.

## Bangabandhu Murder Case

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the winter recess, in that case on the day of reopening of the Supreme Court, that is on January 8, it will come up in the list.

On a query, Advocate Anis said the convicts who are in custody now would only be able to prefer application of appeal to the Appellate Division.

About the usual procedure, Anis said if the Appellate Division also upheld the judgement of the High Court, then the last resort for the convicts awarded death sentences would be to seek mercy from the President.

Confirming the death sentences against all the 15 convicts, junior judge Khairul Huq on Dec 14 said in his judgement "... there is no extenuating or mitigating circumstances in the case, the death sentence under section 302/334 passed by the Sessions Judge upon the accused is hereby affirmed."

Both the justices said the sentence of death, in respect of

whom death reference has been accepted, would be executed as per existing mode of execution of sentence of death.

The trial court judge, Kazi Golam Rasul, in his verdict had ordered execution of the death sentences by a firing squad.

## Assam

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close to the Indian border often cross over to shop in Assam state. Bhutan has a corridor through India's Assam state, connecting its border towns and its vehicles ply daily.

No one claimed responsibility for these attacks. But the Assam state government suspects the involvement of the NDFB, fighting for an independent tribal homeland.

Police said the NDFB attacks might be a warning to the Bhutanese government against targeting its cadres holed up inside the Himalayan kingdom.



A Statue of Liberty replica stands in front of a Christmas tree and the Rainbow Bridge yesterday at Odaiba, Tokyo waterfront area. The replica of the French-made statue, that was installed December 1 after permission was given by French authorities for its construction, was officially unveiled yesterday. -AFP photo

## IRA could disarm by June, commission says

DUBLIN, Dec 22: Disarmament by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland could be achieved by next June, an international commission said today, reports AFP.

In a report to the Irish and British governments, the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) said it was crucial there was "substantive engagement" with the IRA -- the biggest Catholic paramilitary group -- as soon as possible about disarmament.

The commission said it already had agreement in principle on weapons schemes with the Protestant paramilitary groups in the province -- the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF).

"We are anxious to explore with the IRA representative their proposal to put arms beyond use and our role in that process," it said.

"We believe that sufficient time still exists for the complete decommissioning of paramilitary arms by June 2001, and that appropriate methods can be set up for that purpose."

"We believe it is crucial that we have substantive engagement with the IRA representatives as soon as possible, followed by early movement on actual decommissioning by each of the paramilitary groups."

In its report in October, the Commission, headed by Canadian General John de Chastelain, said it had not made progress on actual decommissioning.

"That remains the case to date," its latest report states. The IRA has permitted two separate examinations of weapons dumps by international inspectors Cyril Ramaphosa -- formerly secretary general of the African National Congress -- and former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari.

But the IRA has not made contact with the IICD since June.

Meanwhile, the UVF has warned that activity by dissident paramilitary groups has made decommissioning harder to achieve but both they and the UFF had confirmed previous commitments to press ahead.

## Old man hacked to death by terrorists in Bagerhat

BAGERHAT, Dec 22: An old man was hacked to death by terrorists at village Khalsi in Sadar upazila early today, reports UNB.

The victim, identified as Niranjan Das, 60, died on the spot.

Police and witnesses said the terrorists numbering 7-8 attacked the old man at his home as he refused to give them toll.

Local people caught three of the terrorists, including a woman, and handed them over to the police. They are Haider, 35, and Idris, 40, and his wife Mahmuda Begum, 30.

A case was filed with the police in this connection.

## Two snatchers held with arms at Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Dec 22: Police arrested two snatchers and recovered one shutter gun and some lethal weapons from their possession in the city this morning.

The snatchers were identified as Zana, 20, and Zony, 21.

Patrol police of Boalia thana caught the snatchers while they were trying to snatch gold ornaments from a woman in Kalabagan area in the morning.

A case was recorded with Boalia thana in this connection.

## Women's quota bill

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the 239-member upper house or Rajya Sabha.

The bill, first introduced in 1996 by a previous government, has met with opposition in almost every session of parliament and has never come to vote.

Successive governments have run into problems with the bill, which originally set out to reserve half the legislative seats for women. Following pressure from the mostly male lawmakers, the government reduced the quota to 33 per cent. Most lawmakers want it pegged at between 10 per cent and 15 per cent.

Further complicating matters, lawmakers who rely on the votes of Muslims and other minorities,

say they won't let the bill be considered unless it includes quotas within the quota for the minorities they represent.

The government said it would try to build a consensus among its allies on an Election Commission proposal allowing political parties to fix their own quotas for women candidates. Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani said Friday.

"Under the present circumstances, the EC's proposal appears to be the only option," Advani told journalists.

The bill must be passed by a two-thirds majority since it seeks to amend the Indian constitution. It then must be ratified by the upper house of Parliament.

## SPGRC leaders

From Page 1

following the case filed against its leaders. When asked where a certificate is available, owner of a grocery shop opposite the office interrogated this correspondent.

Convinced, the grocer asked this correspondent to come secretly with Tk 14,000 the next day to get an identity certificate.

Some stranded Pakistani people, known as Biharis, are allegedly engaged in collecting clients for the dishonest SPGRC leaders, sources said.

The DB officials concerned told the Daily Star that Naseem Khan and his sons have no permanent address in Dhaka. The SPGRC leaders use different city hotels and frequently change address.

The DB has already raided a number of residential hotels on Topkhana Road where the SPGRC leaders often stay. The DB officials said they also looked

for Naseem Khan in Rangpur, but he apparently went into hiding.

It is alleged that the SPGRC leaders took Tk 5.4 lakh from Shajahan Talukdar during the period between October and December 1999 promising to send his younger son Mizanur Rahman as a stranded Pakistani to the USA by the last week of December the same year.

Shajahan Talukdar told The Daily Star that he went to court when a cheque given by Mahmood Khan bounced twice. Mahmood Khan issued a cheque of Tk 2.4 lakh against his account at a branch of Islami Bank in Rangpur.

Investigators are now preparing to apply before the court to seek removal of the four accused, who got bail on November 27, for questioning. None of the accused SPGRC leaders, however, were available for comments.

