

## PM avoids discussion

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Office in the afternoon.

The prime minister was learnt to be slightly indisposed. An influential minister who had talks with the prime minister after the cabinet meeting told The Daily Star that chances are there for the government to resign by mid-April to pave the way for the caretaker government to go for polls by mid-June.

During her stay in Saudi Arabia, the prime minister had said her party was ready for polls before June 12, the day in 1996 when the last general election was held. But the Election Commission sees June 14 as the probable date for the ensuing election because of the fact that the HSC examinations would run through June 13.

Most of the ministers expected the prime minister to open a discussion on the crucial issue of election once the official agenda of the cabinet meeting had been dealt with, said a number of ministers who attended the meeting.

Besides, political circles especially the opposition camp was eagerly awaiting to learn about the government's latest stance on the issue of election. Many opposition leaders inquired with the press about the matter.

Senior leaders in the ruling Awami League however said last

night that the election matters are expected to be discussed at length in an extended meeting of the party's central working committee soon.

Presiding over the cabinet meeting, the prime minister directed all ministers to complete by the end of this month the ongoing development projects, especially those involving the AL pledges made during the last general election, meetings sources said.

She also advised her cabinet colleagues not to undertake any new project before the coming election, they added.

Earlier, the cabinet approved a proposal to raise monthly house rent allowance for the Supreme Court judges from Tk 15,000 to Tk 20,000 and car allowance from Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000.

It also endorsed a bilateral treaty on development and protection of capital investment between Bangladesh and Iran, and approved proposed prices and targets of internal procurement of boro rice and wheat for the current year.

However, the cabinet did not approve the long-pending proposal for setting up of Gramen Adalat (village court) as a bill on the issue lacked a clear indication as regards the source of funding. It advised the Law Ministry to prepare a fresh draft.

## Arab FMs appeal for protection force for Palestinians

AFP, Cairo

Arab foreign ministers renewed an appeal here Monday for an international protection force for the Palestinians and warned the United States against moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The foreign ministers were meeting at Arab League headquarters to prepare for an Arab summit in Amman on March 27, which is expected to focus on the Palestinian uprising against Israel and the crumbling UN sanctions on Iraq.

The Arab countries together address the United Nations Security Council, asking it to meet immediately to study ways to set up an international force to protect the Palestinian people, the Arab League said in a statement.

"Arab ministers have (also) decided to make direct contact with the United States, Russia and the European Union, to ask them to take a stand against Israeli measures, especially the blockade of the territories," it added.

Israel has imposed a military blockade on the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the latest Palestinian uprising erupted on September 28, preventing Palestinians from working in Israel and taking a heavy economic toll on them.

The appeal for a protection force follows a similar one issued at the last Arab summit here in Cairo on October 21-22, and amounted to a diplomatic challenge to Israel.

Israeli radio reported Monday that Israel's hardline Prime Minister Ariel Sharon set down efforts to "prevent an internationalisation of the conflict" as one of the five priorities for his new government.

Senior Palestinian official Faruq Qaddumi meanwhile denounced "Israel's arbitrary and dangerous military actions," which are "dividing the West Bank into 40 parts, and the Gaza Strip into five parts."

The secretary general of the Arab League, Esmat Abdel Meguid, opened the meeting here warning the United States and other countries against moving their embassies

in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

"The United States, Russia, the European Union, all countries in the world, as well as international and regional organisations, should expect disastrous consequences for the region and for the interests of all the countries of the world in the region, if embassies are moved to Jerusalem," Abdel Meguid said.

Jerusalem has already proven to be an explosive issue. The uprising started after Sharon, before his election last month as prime minister, visited a site holy to both Jews and Muslims in September in a move seen as pressing an Israeli claim to the entire city.

Palestinians want east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.

Arab officials say that under UN Resolutions 242 and 338, east Jerusalem is part of the occupied territories, and that under Security Council Resolution 478 any measure that affects the holy city's status is illegal.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, when questioned in

Congress last Wednesday, said President George W. Bush was committed to moving "the embassy to the capital of Israel, which is Jerusalem."

Some 435 people, most of them Palestinians, have been killed in more than five months of bloodletting.

On Iraq, Esmat Abdel Meguid said "the Arab nation's obligation is to work toward ending the suffering of the Iraqi people and obtain an end to the military actions against Iraq, which occur outside the UN framework."

He was referring to frequent air strikes US and British pilots have staged in the last two years against Iraqi anti-aircraft and other targets which Washington and London say are threatening the enforcement of no-fly zones.

The allies set up the air exclusion zones after the 1991 Gulf war to protect Iraqi Shiite Muslims in the south and Kurds in the north but they have no specific UN authorisation.

## WB hints at low lending

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The Bank, in the CAS, termed controlling fraud and corruption within IDA-financed projects "a critical priority," as fundamental reform of civil service and governance is likely to take time.

"IDA's efforts to strengthen the prior review process and intensify ex-post reviews have sent a clear signal to the borrower and implementing agencies. In FY00, 24 contracts were declared as misprocurement and US\$ 3.1 million cancelled from various credits."

The Bank said CAS's overarching objective is to help Bangladesh reduce poverty substantially within one generation through consolidation

gains in human development, implementing an integrated approach to rural development and accelerating and broadening private sector-led growth.

The Bank also felt confrontational and non-reformist politics, weak governments and powerful vested interests obstructed the much-needed reforms.

"Along with acute political conflict and consequently weakened governments, the powerful influence of vested interests has prevented the implementation of reforms widely recognised as necessary to accelerate growth and poverty,"

## Kalparanjan briefs PM

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Nils Hulgard of Denmark and Briton Tim Selby - were discussed but peaceful resolution of the crisis was underlined by cabinet members, who ruled out use of force.

New attempts are being made to free the hostages through negotiations via intermediaries with the abductors, the minister said. There had been contact made with the kidnapers via intermediaries since the last contact on March 4. During the meeting use of force was again ruled out by the PM who put emphasis on negotiated settlement of the crisis, the sources said.

They said that some ministers noted that the hostage taking was related to a deliberate attempt by certain quarters in the hills to embarrass the government before the elections.

Some of them blamed Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Lama also known as Shantu Lama for engineering the crisis in connivance with anti-peace elements.

A highly placed source said that authorities were making efforts in a coordinated way and expected that the hostages would be freed soon. Meanwhile, sources in GHT said that Shantu Lama has agreed to lend his hand in freeing the hostages "officially" after his meeting with Army Chief Lt. General Harunor Rashid at Rangamati on Sunday.

But he complained about lack of authority to supervise law and order in the GHT as per article 22(D) of the Regional Council for GHT Act, 1998. He is yet to be vested with the authority by the government, he complained.

## FM skips reply on govt order

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There should be a peaceful solution. Every one should exercise patience." When told that many western countries do not want use of force in this regard, the minister said, "Use of force has been ruled out."

Largest Peace Keeper Bangladesh will emerge as the largest contributor to UN peace-keeping missions after this month, Azad said.

Bangladesh Army will send 2,509 more troops abroad, raising the number of UN peacekeepers from the country to nearly 6000. The troops will mainly go to Sierra Leone, he added.

There are now 3,419 Bangladeshi peacekeepers abroad, of whom 170 are from the police force. Thirteen military personnel and two policemen died in overseas peacekeeping operations and 31 were injured.

Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh is likely to visit Bangladesh towards the end of this month to discuss bilateral issues and also to

attend a meeting of the Joint Economic Commission.

Responding to a question, Azad said, "There is every chance the minister will visit this month but the date is yet to be fixed mutually."

Afghan statues Bangladesh yesterday condemned the destruction of historic statues by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

"Those are a world heritage. We condemn the move," the foreign minister said.

Asked about Bangladesh's delayed reaction, he said, "I was outside the country."

Foreign Secretary Syed Moazzem Ali said Bangladesh had earlier initiated action for their (statues) preservation through the UNESCO.

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN Anwarul Karim, who is here in connection with Kofi Annan's visit, said Dhaka has co-sponsored a resolution in the UN General Assembly condemning the move by the Afghan Taliban.



An injured Palestinian protester is evacuated during a demonstration held at a road between the West Bank town of Ramallah and Bir Zeit yesterday. Eleven Palestinians were injured, one seriously, in clashes that erupted between Israeli troops and demonstrators trying to reopen a West Bank road during a protest against the tightening of a closure on the city of Ramallah.

## Jalal Murder

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that the death was not natural, it was a pre-planned murder. The victim was murdered by some people in the pre-planned way. In the above circumstances, Siddiqui failed a regular case against some unidentified people with Ramna thana on March 16, 1999 as per directive of the OC.

Jalal, a source and driver of the DB of DMP was beaten to death and his body was found in the water tank on the roof-top of the DB office. Jalal was killed reportedly over sharing of source money.

All the accused inspector Ziaul Ahsan, havildar Billal, constable Abdur Rouf and canteen manager Anwar Hossain were present in the court during the hearing.

Additional PP Mohammad Shah Alam Talukder, APP Abdur Rashid Badsha Miah appeared for the state while Advocate Mahubub Ahmed, Shamim Ahsan, Sheikh Baharul Islam and MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam for the accused.

## Chetia

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trial till March 29 due to absence of witnesses and the complainant in the case, a police officer.

Chetia is serving a six-year jail term for illegally possession and a three-year term for illegal possession of foreign currencies.

His two associates -- Babul Sharma and Laxmi Prasad Goswami -- were also sentenced to six years' jail term each for illegal entry but acquitted in the second case.

## Textbooks

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by any means. So it did not go for strict monitoring and quality control, they said.

The Pustaka failed to maintain quality as it allegedly sold the allotment letters to small printing firms, mostly engaged in notebook business.

Officials of NCTB could not be contacted for comments on the issue.

## Liaison body

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Jamaat and Abdul Kader of IOJ. UNB adds: The meeting condemned "government's failure" in arresting those involved in the firing on a BNP procession from a ruling party procession led by Dr H B M Iqbal MP, which left four dead in Malibagh area in the city.

It also demanded "trial of different killings and firing incidents by the sons of ruling party leaders."

The meeting called upon all sections of people to make success the opposition's grand rally in Dhaka on March 21.

## Over 1100 sued for illegal possession of firearms

UNB, Chittagong

More than 1100 political cadres have been sued for keeping firearms without renewing the licence.

Officials say legal action is being taken against 2000 others for keeping firearms without renewing licence despite being asked for it.

The measures were taken on directives from the Home Ministry in a bid to mop up unlicensed firearms under all the 20 thana areas of the district before the forthcoming general elections.

According to officials, holders of 5,101 firearms for which licences were not renewed had been directed to deposit the arms to local thana by February 10.

After scrutiny and investigation, the district administration cancelled licences of 8,483 guns. But, even after repeated requests, the unlicensed arms have not been deposited.

## Ctg JP

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hartal programme. Today, we sat with JP's city leaders at an alliance meeting, but they did not seek our support to any hartal programme."

President of JP's city unit Jahangir Alam however said he has no part in this hartal programme. "Khalid did not discuss with us before calling the hartal and he announced it on his own. Even our city committee leaders have no link with it though we all want release of our leader Ershad."

Former mayor of Chittagong City Corporation and JP leader Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury also said he has no link with the hartal.

The programme has created confusion among party supporters here, sources said.

Administrative officials at a meeting last week decided to file cases against 1,132 owners of firearms on specific charges of illegal use.

Thana officials were also asked to keep close watch on the movement of the owners of firearms.

Licences for 5,138 guns, 1,471 pistols, revolvers and 1,877 rifles have so far been cancelled.

Police sources said cadres of political parties, businessmen and representatives of local government are in possession of these illegal arms.

## Ershad

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about 18 cases. Ershad remained behind the bars from December 12, 1990 till January 9, 1997. During the BNP regime, Ershad did not get any bail in any of these cases. However, after the AL came to power, he was granted bail in all the cases.

He was acquitted of charges in an arms case but was found guilty in three graft cases. Of the three graft cases, two are pending with the High Court while in the other the Janata Tower case he was handed down a five-year imprisonment and asked to pay Tk 5.5 crore fine, failing which he was to serve six more months in jail. He was sent back to jail on November 20 last year.

The other cases are now under trial in different courts.

After serving three months in jail owing to non-payment of the fine, Ershad received the release order after payment of the fine for the remaining three months on March 1. However, the government put him under a one-month detention under the Special Powers Act hours after he received release order.

## Wahid refuses to resign

### Protest rocks Jakarta

AFP, Jakarta

Thousands of Indonesian students took to the streets Monday calling for a national strike to force the resignation of the embattled President Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid.

But a defiant Wahid, speaking at an estimated 10,000 student protesters massed outside the tightly-guarded presidential palace, Italy ruled out stepping down.

"The students who are calling for my resignation are just a small group... I will not resign. My duty is to maintain Indonesia's territorial integrity," Wahid said.

Anti-Wahid protests also took place in at least two other Indonesian cities, as the financial markets reflected the political jitters.

The Jakarta stock market plunged 4.2 per cent to a two-year low and the rupiah sagged to 10,500-10,600 to the dollar.

Some 1,000 workers from the Indonesian Independent Labour Union (Gasperindo) joined the students, urging Wahid to resign and accusing him of failing to improve workers' welfare.

"Stop Talking, Just Resign!" read the words scrawled on an effigy of

Wahid burned by the students.

National Assembly speaker and Wahid's staunchest critic, Amien Rais, went to the protest site with a busload of members of parliament and told the crowds that Wahid's mandate would be withdrawn if he refused to step down.

Wahid, after attending a cabinet meeting, said the country would fall apart if he resigned, but said a proposed fuel price hike scheduled for April would be postponed until October.

He also said that Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who has received considerable public backing to replace Wahid, would play a larger decision-making role in the running of the country.

Jakarta police said 4,000 personnel had been deployed at strategic points in the capital, and its chief, Inspector General Mulyono Sulaiman, said police would do what they could to prevent "anarchy."

Reinforced by the military, they halted a rock throwing incident between anti-Wahid protesters and some 250 Muslim supporters of the president in front of the palace.

"We have come to the conclusion that Gus Dur must go," said Faufik Riyadi, leader of the student union at the state University of Indonesia.

"The country is in a sorry state. Because of that we are calling for a national strike so that Gus Dur will voluntarily resign," he said.

As dusk fell, one car was burned and another car and a motorcycle damaged, as students heading for parliament clashed with unidentified rock throwers.

The students then regrouped at parliament, and more than 2,000 of them flooded into the grounds, where they set up camp.

"Amien Rais has given us the green light to stay here until we hear a decision from the palace on Gus Dur's decision to resign," Eddi Sumtra of the University of Indonesia told AFP. "We are hoping that the numbers will build up like in 1998," he added, referring to the mass student sit-in at parliament that contributed to the ouster of former president Suharto.

In the city of Makassar on Sulawesi island, some 500 students staged a similar anti-Wahid protest outside the local TV station, and in Semarang, the capital of Central Java some 200 students rallied at the local state radio.

## Contact with abductors

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located the suspected hideout of the one of the hostages, Nils Hulgard of Denmark, immediately as he was feeling sick. However, no comments were made on the point during the routine press briefing. The sources, however, said they were regularly supplying food, medicines and other essentials through the tribal negotiators.

In a related development, the security officials said they have

located the suspected hideout of the one of the hostages, Nils Hulgard of Denmark, immediately as he was feeling sick. However, no comments were made on the point during the routine press briefing. The sources, however, said they were regularly supplying food, medicines and other essentials through the tribal negotiators.

"Anyway the suspected hideout is within our cordon," said a security official preferring anonymity.

Head of the Political Section of British High Commission in Graham Clough urged the Press to help the rescue initiatives through presenting "objective reports" and not based on "any" imagination.

Speaking at the briefing, he thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her initiatives to tackle the crisis and said Britain was satisfied with government's efforts in rescuing the hostages unhurt.

## Jail Killing Case

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Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

The then DIG (Prison) Kazi Abdul Awal filed the Jail Killing Case with Lalbagh thana on November 4, 1975. Metropolitan PP Quamrul Islam appeared for the state while Advocate T M Akbar, Haji Nazrul Islam, Abdul Majid Munshi, A B M Sharifuddin Khan Mukul and S M Taufiqul Islam for the accused.

## Kofi Annan arrives today

FROM PAGE 1

keeping operations besides carrying out many UN sponsored activities."

Annan will be flying in from Kathmandu by a special aircraft on the third leg of his four-nation South Asian tour. His first stop was in Pakistan followed by Nepal. He will leave Dhaka for New Delhi on March 15 and will address a press conference at the airport prior to his departure.

Two former UN secretary generals who visited Bangladesh were Kurt Waldheim and Perez de Cuellar.

His Dhaka itinerary includes a courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed, a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and talks with key officials of the Foreign Ministry.

The Secretary General will visit the Choto Kalampur Ashrayan project. He will however not see any specific UN projects but will be meeting the heads of UN bodies in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is presently the second largest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions after Poland and is expected to emerge as the largest contributor next month after another battalion of troops go to Sierra Leone. Besides, Bangladesh is a current non-permanent member of the Security Council.

Annan will visit the Rajendrapur Peacekeeping Training Centre of the Bangladesh Army and witness a

training demonstration.

The UN secretary general and his wife Nane Annan will attend a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in their honour.

Bangladesh has a major UN presence in several spheres through such organisations as the UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNISCO, ILO, WHO and UNFPA.

Annan who began his term on January 1, 1997, hails from the African country of Ghana, formerly known as Gold Coast. He is the seventh secretary general of the United Nations and the first secretary general to be elected from the ranks of the United Nations staff.

Pakistan and India has whipped up a degree of international media attention and are seen as attempts to convince both the countries to sign the CTBT, the efforts of the secretary general, nearly three years after the nuclear blasts are likely to be considered by many as "too little, too late."

Annan's trip to South Asia is also being seen by many South Asian diplomats as part of his campaign for re-election for a second term.

When asked about Bangladesh's position as regards his re-election, the foreign minister declined to say anything "now."

Many Asian nations believe it is the region's turn to have its own candidate for the United Nations, whose current membership stands at 188. The only Asian to have served as secretary general was U Thant from neighbouring Myanmar.

## Pre-polls showdown

FROM PAGE 12

with the BCL.

Its leaders at a press conference in the city recently demanded immediate rehabilitation of all the ousted and displaced activists to their respective halls.

"We want to see all the ousted JCD leaders and workers rehabilitated in their halls as per the tripartite agreement with the authorities and the BCL in 1997," said

Shahabuddin Laitu, the general secretary of JCD.

The deal never bore fruits allegedly because of the BCL's non-cooperation.

JCD also placed their demand before the DU Vice Chancellor Professor AK Azad Chowdhury when his leaders met him last week.

Sources say that the JCD would strike soon after the formation of caretaker government. To prevent the offensive politically, the BCL high command has asked the hall unit leaders and activists to remain alert and bolster organisational activities at their respective dormitories.

## Polls nearing

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When contacted, the CEC said earlier the Commission has to depend on the civil administration to conduct almost all the polls. He emphasised direct recruitment of officials for the EC.

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