

Clashes flare as Palestinians dismiss talks

REUTERS, Jerusalem

New skirmishes erupted between Palestinians and the Israeli army yesterday after Palestinian leaders poured scorn on talk of progress towards Middle East peace by Israel's foreign minister.

Israeli tanks fired four shells at a Palestinian police post near Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip after Palestinians fired two mortar bombs at a collective farm inside Israel, the army said. No casualties were reported in either incident.

Palestinian witnesses said a gunbattle flared between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers near the West Bank city of Ramallah and hospital officials said at least four Palestinians were slightly hurt by shrapnel.

There were no immediate reports of clashes in other parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where violence has raged since Palestinians began an uprising against Israeli occupation more than seven months ago after peace talks became deadlocked.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres voiced optimism after meeting US President George W. Bush in Washington on Thursday.

"I do not know what progress Mr Peres is talking about," Palestinian parliamentary speaker Ahmed Korei, who is also known as Abu Ala, told Reuters by telephone.

He reiterated that the Palestinians regarded peace proposals by Egypt and Jordan as the best way towards peace, and that peace talks must resume from where they left off under the Israeli government ousted in an election in February.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq al-Shara dismissed Peres' remarks, saying during a visit to Spain: "Peres has lost his credibility all over the Arab world. He has no peace plan. He's just trying to deceive people."

The new Israeli government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has reservations about the Egyptian-Jordanian proposals and has put forward no plan of its own. It says peace talks can resume only when the violence stops.

At least 402 Palestinians, 76 Israelis and 13 Israeli Arabs have been killed in the violence.

18 NAM states for revival

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Arafat to the said initiative.

The initiative, launched last month, is aimed at stopping seven months of Palestinian-Israeli violence and restarting peace talks.

The NAM ministers met in Pretoria in response to an urgent request by Arafat that the situation in the Middle East be discussed.

There are no shortcuts. It is really important that they should start speaking again," said NAM ministerial chairwoman and South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

"We will now continue talking to all parties to see what we can do to unblock the logjam," Dlamini-Zuma said.

She added the ministers had given the chairman of NAM, South African President Thabo Mbeki, a broad mandate. "The chairman will be, and is, interacting with everybody involved including Israel."

Arafat left South Africa late Thursday for Zimbabwe, where he was expected to meet with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe to discuss ways of reviving the Middle East peace process.

Shukrana Dibash observed

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Film maker Alamgir Kumkum, Film Actor Faruq, Poet Tridib Dastidar, Rashida Mohiuddin and Gazipur Pourashabha AKM Mozammel Huq attended the prayer at the Gazipur central Jame mosque.

The Hindu community yesterday also offered a special prayer at Dhakeswari Mandir National Temple expressing their gratitude to almighty God at the historic High Court Verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Trial.

A large number of people of the Hindu community joined the prayer organised by Dhaka Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee as part of the nationwide Shukrana Day programme.

Advocate Sudhangshu Shekhar Haldar, President of Bangladesh Puja Udayan Parishad Dr Lalith Mohan Nath, journalist Swapan Kumar Saha and Advocate Satyendra Nath Bhakta spoke on the occasion.

Community leaders Joyanta Sen Dipu, Mrs Sabitri Bhattacharya, Monindra Kumar Nath, Mongol Chandra Ghose, Joyanta Kumar Dev, Panjaj Nath, Mrs Dipen Chatterjee, Babul Devnith, Nirmla Chatterjee, Chandranath Poddar, Shukendra Shekhor Baidya and Amal Dutta, among others, attended the prayer.

Dr Paresh Chandra Mandol led the prayer while Ajiit Chandra Bhattacharya cited verses from the holy Geeta seeking eternal peace for the departed souls of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members who were killed on August 15, 1975.

They also prayed for the peace, progress and prosperity of the country.

BTTB plans

FROM PAGE 1

54,000 per year for 30 leased lines in addition to the one-time demand note charge of Tk 549,000. The E1 connection would cost about Tk 75,000 per year for the same package.

Also, the European standard line would ensure better speed 56 kilobyte per second (kpbs) instead of the existing 16.8kpbs, the source said.

The new rate has been proposed to the ministry following a request made by the IT Task force for further concession, he said.

He said The E1 would also help ease pressure on the BTTB network at night when most Internet users hook up to make most of off-peak hours.

Kashmir group

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between India and Pakistan or India and Kashmiri groups had failed in the past.

"Till problem of Kashmir is discussed with all the concerned parties including Pakistan, a solution cannot be found," Geelani said.

Tari and Geelani arrived here with a letter from Shah on Wednesday, in response to an invitation for talks from India's chief negotiator on Kashmir, Krishna Chandra Pant.

Shah had said the invitation had some "ambiguities" which needed to be clarified before he agreed to start a dialogue.

Average emission

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Respiratory tract, especially the alveolar regions.

Medical experts warn that these may cause a number of ailments like heart disease, impaired vision, manual dexterity and learning disability. In extreme cases, these poisonous particles may lead individuals to death.

Studies showed that ultra-fine particles (with diameters of less than 0.05 microns) get cleared from the lungs in a very slow process and can penetrate the pulmonary interstitium, where they cause inflammation.

The largest source of fine particulate formation is the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels and biomass. Low fuel quality, inefficient combustion process, and poor vehicles and equipment maintenance all contribute to particulate emission.



Shikkhak Karmachari Oikya Jote paraded the city streets yesterday in support of their 6-point demand.

India conducts fresh autopsy

FROM PAGE 1

activity" because they surrounded the BDR post and tried to attack from 50 to 75 yards.

"An assault from all sides means you're firing on your own men," the soldier was quoted as saying. "And to attack a post which has an LMG from so close is really foolish. Had our post simply been openly surrounded by a larger BSF force, we would have vacated peacefully", he explained, adding that it would have been "a good tit-for-tat" for the BDR moving into Padua. "But the BSF opened fire. Perhaps they thought our LMG was being readied."

"Forget about torture", another BDR personnel told the newspaper, "we are not even mentally prepared to fight Indian soldiers. If a Pakistani comes, we can do anything to throw him out. But, we don't think of India that way. We are independent because of India."

Asked about the photograph of a dead BSF man being carried on a bamboo pole, the villagers

explained to the Indian daily that they had to recover the bodies from the paddy fields while heavy shooting was going on.

"Every time we went near the bodies, the BSF would fire," claimed a local. "So, we crawled up to each body, tied its ankles together and slowly dragged it out. Even one BDR body was recovered that way."

Villagers said that once out of firing range, they tied the body to a pole "to cover the three kilometre to Boraibari more easily."

Meanwhile, India's High Commissioner in Dhaka Manilal Tripathi on Tuesday handed over to Foreign Minister Abud Samad Azad documents detailing concerns about the alleged torture and slaying of the Indian border security forces, according to the Times of India.

The documents also called for a prompt probe into the deaths of the BSF men, which the government had already ordered.

But, the foreign minister at a

press briefing at his office following his meeting with the Indian envoy on Tuesday said that the two sides had only expressed their concern to each other over the border incident.

The Bangladesh government strongly defended the BDR action as an act of self-defence and categorically said the Indian border guards had intruded into Boraibari village of Bangladesh on April 18.

Meanwhile, the BDR lodged a complaint with Roumari police on Wednesday against the killing of three of its members in the April 18 clash at Boraibari, and the intrusion and attack by the BSF into Bangladesh territory as well.

The two countries have wrangled over the 4,000-km border since Bangladesh earned independence in 1971. The border is not clearly demarcated, and there are many enclaves and disputed frontier villages, which often lead to skirmishes between security forces and citizens of both countries.

Star employee robbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers snatched Tk nine thousands and other valuables from Siddiqur Rahman, an employee of The Daily Star, in the city's Shahinbagh area last night.

The incident took place when Siddiqur Rahman was returning to his West Rajabazar residence from Mahakhali bus stand by an autorickshaw.

Three muggers intercepted the autorickshaw at about 8:30 pm and took away the money and his wrist-watch at gunpoint. They also forced him out of the vehicle and sped away.

On receiving the news, Tejgaon police went on the hunt for the muggers but failed to arrest anybody.

Feni terrorists

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mercilessly and left the spot, leaving him in an unconscious state.

On receiving information, police went to the spot and took Alim to Daganbhuiyan Health Complex.

According to UNB, a group of terrorist, said to be the members of Hazari's 'class committee', led by Suruj beat up Alim for his report 'Subscription of Hazarika Compulsory in Daganbhuiyan'.

Hazarika is a weekly owned by ruling party MP Joyanal Hazari.

A case was filed with Daganbhuiyan thana in this connection yesterday evening.

JCD committee

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54 after a rally.

The followers of Pintu and Laltu on the campus do not take part in activities as they do not possess any posts while the faithful to former JCD President Habibunnabi Sohler are now in the mainstream of all street activities, insiders said.

The DU unit president of JCD Manir Hossain, with few activists conducts party activities outside the campus.

During the hartal times, the DU unit leaders and workers remained outside the campus whole day and never dare to enter the campus area, sources said. Even just few months back JCD used to hold rally at the TSC crossing, but now they stay out.

On the other hand, the pro-Awami Chhatra League reigns supreme on the campus and keeps vigilance on their opponents.

NBR reminders

FROM PAGE 1

VAT and supplementary duties.

The chairman reminded the defence secretary also of the fact that the Customs, Excise and VAT Commissionerate (Dhaka north) also wrote a number of letters asking the authorities of clubs, restaurants and cinema halls run by army, navy and air forces in Dhaka Cantonment to pay VAT and other duties.

"But there was no progress in it," he regretted in his letters.

The chairman asked the two secretaries to take urgent steps in this regard.

It was reported in The Daily Star earlier that none of such establishments located inside different cantonments and BDR barracks pays any duty and tax to the government.

The report also mentioned the names of some establishments, which provide services to the general people and earn crores of taka annually. There are at least six such establishments in the Dhaka Cantonment. These are: Senakunja, Sagorika Cinema Hall, BAF Shaheen Auditorium, Garrison Cinema Hall, Sainik Club Cinema Hall and Golfers' Inn.

Bomb blast kills 8 in Afghanistan

AP, Islamabad

A powerful bomb exploded inside an ancient mosque in western Afghanistan yesterday, killing at least eight people including an exiled Iranian cleric and injuring scores more, a Taliban official said.

Maulvi Mohammed Mussa, a Sunni Muslim cleric, was killed in the explosion in Herat city, along with another Iranian believed to be the bomber, Herat Provincial Governor Khairullah Kaikhwa said in a telephone interview.

Mussa had been living in Herat for several years, reportedly since his mosque in majority Shiite Muslim Iran was burned down. It was not clear whether Mussa was the target of the bombing.

Riots followed the deadly bombing, resulting in attacks on the Iranian Consulate as well as on several Shiite Muslim mosques in the city, said Kaikhwa.

The bomb exploded during afternoon prayers yesterday.

At least eight people were killed,

said Kaikhwa, but Iranian sources reached in neighboring Pakistan said the death toll was at least 20. They also said about 100 people were injured in the powerful blast.

Another Taliban official, Abdul Hanan Himat, chief of the Taliban's Bakhtar News Agency in the Afghan capital of Kabul, said that the bomb exploded inside the grand marble Jami Mosque as Mussa gave a sermon. Two of his bodyguards were among the dead.

"The people of Herat accused Iran behind this explosion is Iran," said Himat.

Immediately after the explosion hundreds of people set fire to Shiite Muslim Mosques in Herat and marched on the Iranian Consulate, destroying several vehicles and part of the consulate.

The Taliban evacuated the consulate, according to Himat, who did not know how many Iranian diplomats were at the consulate.

Law & order deteriorates

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Purbakone on the night of April 18. Journalists based in Chittagang launched agitation programmes and local dailies kept blank space on the front pages as a mark of protest and demanded his immediate arrest.

The journalists here also formed a human chain on April 29 and observed a seven-hour hunger strike in front of Chittagang Press Club the following day demanding arrest of and punishment to Mamun. Sources said such an incident inside the newspaper office has scared professional journalists in the port city.

Mamun has unleashed a reign of terror in the city despite being entangled in over 20 criminal cases and he is enjoying blessing of some ministers and ruling party stalwarts, sources said.

A minister based here sheltered Mamun even after the police were on the look out for him in connection

with a case filed by journalists under the Public Safety Act (PSA), sources said.

On April 29, Tk three lakh were looted from a shop at Chawkbazar in the heart of the city by some identified terrorists. Although a case was filed with Panchlaish thana under PSA, none has so far been arrested.

An alleged terrorist wanted in connection with over a dozen criminal cases was shot dead at Bakalia by his rivals following a dispute over a deal to purchase arms on April 27, police and other sources said.

A young man was shot dead by his rivals over a dispute over extraction of bamboo in Pahartoli area on April 25. Illegal toll collection from business houses and markets by crime syndicates is a common phenomenon in this port city, sources said.

A minister based here sheltered Mamun even after the police were on the look out for him in connection

Litmus test for Vajpayee, Sonia

FROM PAGE 12

uphill task to return to power due to a formidable challenge put up by the Congress.

Ruling left-wing governments in West Bengal and Kerala also face stiff opposition from Congress-backed regional rivals.

In West Bengal, the world's longest-serving democratically elected Communist government is facing its most serious challenge since coming to power 22 years ago.

Any weakening of the ruling allies in these states, coupled with a strong showing by the Congress, would immediately impact on the federal coalition in New Delhi.

"Vajpayee will have to worry about getting more allies if his regional ally in Tamil Nadu is routed. The same is the case in West Bengal," said analyst Pran Chopra, head of the Delhi-based Centre of

Policy Research.

"What is at stake is the strength of the coalition and its allies particularly in the larger states of Tamil Nadu and Assam," agreed Rangarajan.

Such is the complexity of the coalition politics in India that any major shift in the state elections is likely to trigger off a frantic round of political horse-trading.

"There is certainly going to be intense politicking after these elections," said Chopra. "Both for the Vajpayee's own BJP party and the Congress, the outcome of these elections will decide whether parliamentary elections will be advanced."

Muddying the equation further is the possibility that a powerful showing by regional parties could signal a revival of efforts to set up a genuine "Third Front" capable of challenging the BJP and Congress at the

Questionable aspects

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motor vehicles within certain limits at certain points of roads where considerations of road safety and security of road users are important factors. For examples, speed breakers are raised at entrance and exit points of schools, hospitals and other important organisations where safety requirements for passing vehicles and pedestrians traffic are of paramount significance.

It has, however, been observed that erection of speed breakers on city roads does not always follow some basic principles. Sometimes the considerations of safety are so much overplayed that speed breakers are raised on a small stretch of road which, in effect, considerably

slow down the vehicular traffic, leading, at times, to traffic jams at peak hours, much to the inconvenience of travelling passengers.

Dumping of construction materials on roads and footpaths continue unabated. A High Court Bench gave a verdict on February 11 asking the government to keep city roads and footpaths from illegal occupation and encroachment. The verdict is yet to be executed by the authorities.

Armed with the ruling of the High Court, the Dhaka City Corporation should exert fully pressure in performing its duties and responsibilities in the matter of clearing the encumbered city roads.

Mobs go on rampage in Sri Lankan capital

AFP, Colombo

Police fired teargas to break up stone-throwing Muslim mobs outside a police station in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo yesterday, witnesses here said.

Hundreds of devotees poured out of a mosque after Friday prayers and attacked vehicles and police to protest what they called attacks against their community at a town in central province earlier in the week, witnesses said.

More than a dozen vehicles were damaged in the mob violence here, witnesses said adding that a large number of police were brought to the area in anti-riot squad trucks.

The situation in the Maradana area of Colombo was brought under control following the deployment of a large number of anti-riot squad police but the mobs moved further northwards to the commercial area of Pettah.

Police said security had been stepped up to prevent further violence in the capital amid tension that prompted many shopkeepers to put up shutters.

A gasoline station was also attacked by the mobs, but police said they were lucky to have

avoided a major fire.

Police said the situation in the town of Mawanella, 90 kilometres (56 miles) northeast of here, remained calm Friday after rioting on Wednesday that left one man dead and 20 others injured. Some 90 shops, 10 houses, two garment factories and 11 cars were also damaged.

Former SLA chief surrenders

AFP, Rosh Hanikra

One of the leaders of the former pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, Said Karamallah, returned to Lebanon Friday to give himself up to the authorities, an AFP correspondent on the northern Israeli border reported.

Karamallah, who was head of logistics for the SLA, crossed the border at Rosh Hanikra on the Mediterranean coast at around 11:00 a.m. (0800 GMT) and in the company of troops of the UN peace-keeping force UNIFIL gave himself up to a Lebanese army post.

Alleged mugger killed

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Sirajuddin Sheikh of Jurain, Mokhesur Bhuiyan, 28, son of Khaleq Bhuiyyan of Comilla and Korban Ali, 26, son of Atahar Sarker of Kafrul area. They were taken to the Ramna police station.

Injured Dulal was hit by a bullet that pierced his belly and was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition.

DMP Commissioner in an order on January 18, 2000 asked police to 'shoot on sight' muggers and robbers to arrest the capital's 'deteriorating' crime situation.

In another incident, a student was shot dead by unidentified men near Padma Cinema Hall in the city's Khilgaon area yesterday afternoon.

The dead Farid Hossain Babu, son of Amjad Hossain was a resident of Madhubagh in the city's Ramna area.

Babu was coming from Khilgaon in a rickshaw when three armed men chased him in front of Padma Cinema Hall. Babu tried to escape but was shot dead by the armed men in front of 31, DIT road where he died on the spot at about 2pm yesterday.

Khilgaon police recovered the body of the victim from the spot and sent it to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Police could not give any other details about the murder till last night. They however said that Babu was an HSC examinee.

A case is yet to be filed in this regard.

Lalbagh police recovered the body of an unidentified young man from Hossain Ali Khan Lane in the city's Lalbagh area at about 7:45am yesterday.

The identity of the man aged about 24 could not be known. There were marks of injuries on his head, chest, back, hands and legs.

Police said he might have been killed some time on Thursday night.

A case was filed with Lalbagh police station in this regard. The body was sent to Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

CMP reward

FROM PAGE 1

also been promised that the identity of the informer will be kept secret.

Mamun stormed into the Purbakone office and assaulted the chief sub-editor and in-charge of the reading section, dragging them out on the street on the night of April 18. Mamun is absconding since the incident.

All the editors, journalists and employees of newspapers in Chittagang have been agitating for over a fortnight demanding arrest and trial of Mamun.

Mamun, a Jubo League leader, who led an armed gang known as 'Mamun Bahini', became ward commissioner through vote rigging in the last city corporation election on January 03, 2000. Mamun, whose movable property has already been attached, allegedly amassed a property of over Tk 20 crore.

At present, a terrorist group in Fatikchhari known as 'Tayeb Bahini' led by SM Abu Tayeb is sheltering Mamun.

Businessman dead

Khandaker Nazmul Hossain, a renowned businessman and social worker of Faridpur, died of old-age ailment at a clinic in the city's Pallabi area yesterday.

He left behind his wife, two sons, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Nazmul Hossain was a cousin of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The first namaj-e-janaza of Hossain was held at the Pallabi Jame Mosque after Magrib prayers. He will be buried at his family graveyard at Harukandi in Faridpur today.

His quikhwani will be held at Pallabi Jame Mosque after Asr prayers on Monday.

Hearing the death news, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina went to the Pallabi residence of Hossain to pay last respect to him.

In a message, the Prime Minister condoled the death of Khandaker Nazmul Hossain. She prayed for salvation of the departed soul and extended her sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

A moral action of our time

FROM PAGE 1

Constitution giving them permanent protection against any legal measure for their heinous act. While the world progressed towards democracy, accountability and freedom we became the only country in the world where self-professed killers were given immunity by an article of the Constitution. Our heads bowed in shame as the supreme law of the land—our Constitution—was defiled.

Twenty-six years ago the most gruesome tragedy fell upon us. Sadly, we are experiencing a tragedy (among several others) of a different kind today, and that is what prompted today's commentary. Many people today are judging the verdict on Bangabandhu's killers NOT on the basis of the fundamental immorality of the act, the enormous inhumanity of the event, and the basic unconstitutionality of the action BUT on the basis of their views and attitudes towards Sheikh Hasina and the performance of the present day government. The tragedy is that the corruption, nepotism and partisanship in almost every action of the present government and its widespread abuse of power are affecting people's attitude towards the verdict on

Bangabandhu's killers. We feel deeply saddened when decent and otherwise democratically minded people take an ambivalent attitude towards this trial and its outcome. This we find to be most tragic and warn that it must be avoided.

To us far more than a legal or a political question, the trial of Bangabandhu's killers is a MORAL question. It is something that we owe to history, to all those who participated and died in our Liberation War and, most importantly, to ourselves. Did the leader whom we trusted, admired and followed deserve to die the way he did? What was the crime for which he was deprived of the life in which he was at his prime (he was only in his mid-fifties and think of what he had already achieved by then)? Was it for BAKSAL or the excesses of Rakkhi Bahini or Siraj Sikdar's death in police custody that he was assassinated? Is Bangabandhu the only leader in history to have made mistakes? De Gaulle ruled France with an iron hand and was quite hated by the time he left. Didn't Ho Chi Minh make any mistake, or for that matter Gamal Abdul Nasser or Fidel Castro? Take Mao Ze Dong.

Didn't his agricultural policies and industrialisation schemes cause havoc to the Chinese economy leading to famine and death of thousands? Didn't his Cultural Revolution result in economic, social and intellectual disaster? The Chinese people honour Mao in spite of his faults and mistakes because of his role in bringing independence to his people. Why can't we do the same for Bangabandhu? Would it be wrong to say that Mao was able to give freedom to the Chinese people but was a failure as a builder of modern China? Doesn't that same epitaph go for Bangabandhu as well?

Then again who are the people who killed him, along with much of his family? Are they better patriots, better democrats, better politicians or better human beings? By what right did they play with the fate of our people and the destiny of our country? If anybody had the mandate of the people it was Bangabandhu. He grossly misused it when he formed BAKSAL. But the punishment for that could only be meted out by the people, who only have the right to make and break an elected leader. No major, no captain and no

havidar has any such 'right'. We seem to forget that Bangabandhu was no usurper of power but an elected leader who came to power because people chose him. And it was the chosen leader of the people who was murdered by people who had nobody else's support except their own. So there is a fundamental moral and ethical question linked with the trial of his killers.

There are two simple messages that we would like to conclude with. First, that in spite of everything else Bangabandhu must be judged and honoured for the simple fact that he has led us to freedom. Second, that as a human being and as a citizen of this country he is entitled to the same dispensation of law and of justice that everyone else is entitled to.

The trial of Bangabandhu's killers is the most significant moral action of our time and that should form the fundamental basis of our way of looking at it.

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