

## Bangladesh condemns attack on Arafat's HQ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is deeply concerned at the Israeli attack on the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Making a statement in the House, the prime minister said Bangladesh strongly condemns Israeli President Ariel Sharon's statement describing Arafat an enemy. Calling Sharon's statement irresponsible, she said it had exposed the Israeli leader's aggressive attitude.

Amid repeated desk-thumping, Khaleda called upon world leaders to ensure all kinds of security to Arafat and other Palestinian leaders. She also warned that Israel would be held responsible for any harm caused to President Arafat.

"Bangladesh calls upon both sides to end conflict of all forms and launch a meaningful dialogue immediately," she told parliament.

The prime minister also said

## Log-in hitch still persists

STAR REPORT

The Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) has fixed most of the log-in problem the city's Internet users faced since Thursday morning, but some problems still persist in some areas.

The Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) said at 9 pm last night that Internet users in some part of the city were facing some difficulties. "Internet users in Uttara, Gulshan and old part of the city were facing difficulties to log on to their ISPs", Akhteruzzaman Manju, President of ISPA, told The Daily Star.

The BTB engineers and other technical staff were working in the respective telephone exchanges to fix the problems, BTB officials said. They hoped that Internet operation would return to normalcy today.

Thousands of Internet users in the city were shut out of the information superhighway since Thursday morning as they could not log on to the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) due to some disruption in clock pulse which synchronises the dial-up system of the ISPs.

The BTB identified the problem Saturday afternoon and then went

## Case against Mohd Nasim, Motia, 2 AL leaders sent to PSA tribunal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The case against former home minister Mohammad Nasim, former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury and two others under the Public Safety Act (PSA), was sent to the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Public Safety, Disturbances and Crimes, Dhaka yesterday for trial.

Judge Mohammad Abdur Razzak accepted the case file but did not fix any date for next hearing of the case.

Two other accused are Awami League central leader Dr Mostafa

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Apr 1		6-14 pm
Apr 2	5-50 am	

  

Prayer Timings		
Apr 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Suicide bomber kills 14 in Israeli restaurant

REUTERS, Jerusalem

A suspected Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up in a packed restaurant in the northern Israeli port city of Haifa yesterday, killing at least 14 people and wounding at least 23, police and medics said.

The explosion occurred as the Israeli army was battling Yasser Arafat's security forces outside his West Bank offices in a sharp upsurge of violence in an 18-month-old Palestinian uprising against occupation.

It was the fourth suicide bombing in Israel during the week-long Jewish Passover holiday that began last Wednesday. The first three attacks, claimed by militant Palestinian factions, killed 24 people and wounded almost 200.

A spokesman for the Israeli Magen David Adom ambulance service confirmed local media reports that at least 14 people had been killed in the

blast that devastated the restaurant, the Matza, near a shopping mall and gas station.

"We are talking about a suicide bomber," northern Israeli police commander Yaakov Borovsky told reporters at the scene in Israel's third largest city and biggest Mediterranean port with a population of around half a million.

"The place was filled with a large number of people so we have many casualties," Borovsky said. At least six people were in serious condition, medics reported. The restaurant, crowded at the time, was demolished, witnesses said. Haifa Mayor Amram Mizne told Israeli Channel 1 television: "I can't be certain at this point, but it seems to me that every person who was in that restaurant was casualty."

The explosion tore out the restaurant roof and spewed debris across a nearby parking lot. Witness Yehezkiel Tsair said: "The entire ceiling col

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# Canada keen to invest in telecom, IT, other sectors

## Accord to increase bilateral trade

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Canada yesterday reached a broad-based agreement to increase the volume of bilateral trade and investment.

The agreement came at official talks between visiting Canadian Secretary of State David Kilgour and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman at the Foreign Office.

The Canadian side expressed keen interest to invest in telecommunications, IT and gas-based industrial sector. They also expressed interest in new areas like jewellery and tourism sectors.

The two sides also discussed simplification of visa

procedure for Bangladeshi students and increased intake of immigrant workers from Bangladesh, Foreign Office Director General (America and Pacific) Nasim Ferdous said while briefing newsmen on the talks that lasted one and a half hours.

The Canadian side informed that the Canadian International Trade Committee is exploring the probability of recommending to parliament the elimination of tariff and quota restrictions on everything except agricultural products from LDCs including Bangladesh by the end of April, she said.

At the moment, the annual increase in export of Bangladeshi garments to Canada is 6 per cent. If the

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# Gunfight at Arafat's doorsteps



PHOTO: AFP

An Israeli soldier in a tank patrols in front of a banner of Yasser Arafat in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday.

AFP, Ramallah

Besieging Israeli forces smashed their way to Yasser Arafat's doorstep yesterday, blasting through a wall into an adjacent room and threatening his life, Palestinian officials said.

Although the Israelis denied entering Arafat's offices on the third day of their siege of his West Bank headquarters, Palestinian information minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said, "We are expecting the worst."

Machine-gun fire echoed around the compound that the Israelis have occupied since rolling into Ramallah early Friday with tanks and armoured personnel carriers.

Two explosions believed to be from grenades were heard outside Arafat's three-storey building.

"The life of President is in danger and Israeli soldiers are firing on his office," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told Egyptian television in a choked voice. "All communications were cut."

Palestinian officials said the Israelis punched their way into the offices of the governor of Ramallah, who shares half of the building with Arafat and is separated from him by

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## Cops trade fire with terrorists in Raozan: Arms recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Police recovered one Chinese-made AK-56 assault rifle, 105 bullets, ten chargers and two magazines from Thakurpara village under Raozan upazila on Saturday midnight.

A raid by police led to a half-an-hour gunfight and brief tussle with two terrorists -- Saikya, 22, and Abbas, 23 before the recovery of the rifle and ammunition. The terrorists escaped police arrest, though.

Saikya and Abbas allegedly belong to the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Islami Chhakra Shibir.

Injured were sub-inspectors

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## Wahid murder Titu's bail prayer rejected, sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Ahsanul Islam alias Titu, son of former Awami League MP Alhaj Mokbul Hossain, arrested in connection with the killing of ward commissioner candidate Wahiduzzaman, was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

Mohammadpur police produced Titu before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 3.00 pm yesterday on expiry of a two-day remand.

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# Toll collectors make merry under political patronage

RAFIQ HASAN

Political pressure is keeping the directorate of labour from taking actions against a section of transport unionists who regularly collect tolls from transport owners.

"We had decided to take legal actions against them [unionists], but had to abandon the plan following a phone call from an influential leader belonging to the ruling party," said a directorate official requesting anonymity.

The source said all the toll collectors get political shelter, which makes them immune to police action.

However, Dr. Ruhul Quddus, director of labour, denied any political pressure on them while taking actions against trade unions.

"Rather, the political leaders often ask us to take actions against toll collectors, operating under the cover of trade unions."

Admitting their inability to control extortion by trade unions, he said: "They [trade unions] are very powerful and often do not follow our instructions."

"Besides, they challenge us in the court if we try to cancel their registration," the director said.

He however told The Daily Star that show cause notices would soon

be served on the trade unions which are involved in toll collection on roads, highways and terminals.

According to the law, the trade unions or owners' associations cannot collect money from vehicle owners. All they can do is to collect monthly subscription fees from their members.

"But many of them are collecting illegal toll," Quddus said.

Meantime, while protesting a news item in The Daily Star, the Dhaka Inter-district Maxi, Duranta, Taxi Cab and Human Hauler Sarak Paribahan Sramik Union (registration No. 3882) admitted that it

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# End of an era

REUTERS, London

Britain yesterday mourned its oldest and best-loved royal after the death of the Queen Mother, the final figurehead of British resistance in World War Two.

The mother of Queen Elizabeth died in her sleep on Saturday afternoon at the age of 101, with her daughter at her bedside.

Along with wartime leader Winston Churchill, the "Queen Mum" symbolised the best of British grit, yet was also a woman of wit and fun, who joked at her own expense, cheered on her horses at

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## 336 murdered in country last month

UNB, Dhaka

A total of 336 people were murdered in the country last month, making a daily average of 11 according to findings by crime-watchers.

One journalist was among those killed in March. The number of murders in February was 280, according to the monthly report of the Institute of Democratic Rights (IDR), published yesterday.

The IDR also recorded 30 death threats to journalists in March.

The number of death threats to journalists was 16 in February, said the IDR, a legal aid and human rights organisation.

Harun-ur-Rashid, staff reporter of Daily Purbanchal of Khulna, was murdered following his report on terrorist gangs in the area, published in the daily on March 3.

Besides, 139 incidents of repression on women and children were counted in March, up from only 56 in February.

The IDR, however, showed a decrease in incidents of acid throwing and giving fatwa, recording 16 and 1 respectively in March, and 18 and 3 in February.

In another report, Adhikar, a coalition for human rights organisations, said political killings were recorded in March. The number of deaths in different prisons was six.

A total of 230 road, rail and river accidents occurred in March, down from 239 in the previous month.

# Gas cylinder burst kills 3 in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gas cylinder explosion left three persons killed and three others injured at Natunbazar in the city's Badda area yesterday.

Nurul Islam, 55, a teashop owner, Mohammad Dulal, 30, a rag picker, and Bashir, 22, a pedestrian, died, being injured in the cylinder blowout at a scrap metal shop.

The incident took place in front of Darjibazar slum at the block No. J of Badda at about 11:30am, when an employee of the scrap metal shop owned by one Nurul tried to move it. The cylinder rocketed up in the sky, slammed against an electric pole and fell down on Dulal, Nurul Islam and Bashir on the ground. Nurul was standing in front of his teashop leaving it with his wife.

Also injured were a ten-year-old girl and two other children. Nurul, Dulal and Bashir were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where on-duty doctors declared Nurul dead. Dulal and Bashir died in the afternoon.

Last week, Uttara police arrested the owner of the scrap shop for his alleged involvement in criminal activities.

After the blowout, the employees who were running the shop in the

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PHOTO: STAR

Relatives of victims of the gas cylinder explosion grieve their death at Badda in the city yesterday.



## Review identifies Bangladesh as 'cocoon of terrorism'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) in its April 4 edition ran a cover story under the headline "Beware of Bangladesh", portraying a negative image of Bangladesh.

The Hong Kong-based news weekly in the report by Bertil Lintner further carries headlines inside -- "Bangladesh: A Cocoon of Terror" with a sub-headline, "Secularism

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## Businessman rescued: 7 arrested

BSS, Dhaka

The Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday rescued an abducted businessman from the city's Bhasantek area and arrested seven persons including a woman for their alleged involvement in the kidnapping.

A team of DB police led by Assistant Commissioner M Mahmud Alam, on the basis of a mobile call by the kidnappers, arrested three alleged kidnappers from near Sagarika Cinema Hall at Bhasantek Saturday night. Police arrested them when they went there to receive ransom which they demanded from relatives of the

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## Hunger strike at Bandarban jail ends

UNB, Bandarban

Some 552 nationals of Myanmar and Thailand at Bandarban prison have ended their hunger strike on condition that they will be sent home within 15 days and given adequate food.

DIG (prison) Abdus Salam, Deputy Commissioner DK Chowdhury and Police Super Abdul Bari Mia negotiated and broke their hunger strike Saturday night with bread and banana. They began the hunger strike on Friday.

Officials said that the foreign

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# Symbols for city polls allocated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electing symbols were allocated among the contestants for the ensuing city polls in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna metropolises scheduled for April 25.

The returning officers concerned distributed the symbols -- based either on consensus or lottery -- for the posts of mayor and ward commissioners and the reserved seats for women ward commissioners in the three corporations.

Twenty-eight candidates are running for the post of mayors,

1,054 for the ward commissioners and 264 for the women ward commissioners. Main opposition Awami League has boycotted the polls.

Dhaka City Corporation mayoral hopeful Sadeq Hossain Khoka of the BNP-led ruling coalition got umbrella symbol.

Electing symbols allocated among the mayoral candidates are fez cap for Kamrul Hasan, hurricane for ABM Mostafa Amin, spectacle for Khalequ Islam Bakul, motor car for Mohammad Shamsad, ship for Abdul Basit, wheel for Md Fazlul Haque, lock for

Mohammad Shahin, tiger for Krishak Mohammad Sadeq, fish for Afzalul Haq Shikder, rose for ANM Zaved Raza, bicycle for Shamsul Haque Zehadi, bullock cart for Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, mike for Mohammad Aman Ullah Shikder, football for Md Mahubul Chowdhury, book for Mohammad Syed Noor, camel for Begum Noor Zahan, pigeon for Syed Motahar Hossain, clock for Mostafa Allama and chair for ATM Hemayet Uddin.

In Rajshahi, incumbent mayor and four-party alliance candidate Mizanur Rahman Minu got fish symbol, while rebel BNP candidate

Quamrul Monir was given book. The 11-party candidate, Fazley Hossain Badsha, was allocated wheel, Jatiya Party candidate SM Basharuazzaman Hira got wall clock and independent candidate Solaiman Hossain umbrella.

In Khulna, incumbent mayor and four-party alliance candidate Tayebur Rahman got hurricane symbol while 11-party candidate Feroz Ahmed got rose and independent runner Enayet Ali bicycle.