

Israel to cooperate with UN fact-finding mission

Search for survivors on at Jenin refugee camp

AFP, Jenin Refugee Camp, West Bank

Residents continued to dig through the rubble of the devastated Jenin camp yesterday in search of survivors and the dead, as Israel promised to cooperate with a UN fact-finding mission that will examine its invasion of the camp.

The body of one man was pulled from the rubble by a team of foreign rescuers working under the aegis of the Red Cross, but work was proceeding slowly for fear of explosive devices thought to be planted in the northern West Bank camp.

The UN Security Council adopted a US-sponsored resolution on Friday night calling for a fact-finding team to be chosen by Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's spokesman, Raanan Gissin, said yesterday that Israel would cooperate with the team "because we have nothing to hide."

He added, however, that Israel "considered it regrettable that the UN and the international community had not decided to inquire into the direct responsibility of (Palestinian leader) Yasser Arafat."

He accused Arafat of using the refugee camp and its civilian population "like human shields to protect terrorists from the Israeli army, as it had done in Lebanon in the eighties."

Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erakat welcomed the UN Security Council resolution, pledging cooperation with whomever is sent but doubting that Israel would be as forthcoming.

Erakat wanted the mission to arrive "as soon as possible," adding that he hoped that "the team that will be sent for the inquiry will come with a guarantee of freedom of movement."

The Security Council decision came shortly after Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres gave the nod to Annan to "send someone" to look into recent events at the camp.

Resolution 1405 also expressed concern at the "dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian civilian population" and emphasised the urgency of allowing medical and relief workers access to them.

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PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Workers offload cement bags at Pagla in Narayanganj yesterday. Cement price has gone up due to what wholesalers say, supply shortage. Cement companies claim that they have to make do with five hours of production everyday. Meanwhile, price of clinkers has also increased. Cement is now being sold at Tk 225-235 per bag, up 30 to 40 taka from the previous rate of Tk 190-195.

Abduction of businessman sparks protests in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A businessman was kidnapped allegedly by an armed gang of tribal youths from his house here on Friday night.

The incident sparked off angry protests by businessmen, who put up road barricades and staged a demonstration in front of the deputy commissioner's office yesterday noon, demanding his rescue within 24 hours.

Police quoting the victim's family sources said three tribal youths called contractor and timber trader Abul Hashem alias Bhagina Hashem, 40, out of his residence at KK Roy Sarak in the town and took him away at gunpoint. The gang fled in two engine boats kept in the lake nearby.

Driver of Hashem's vehicle, Dulal, was beaten by the gang when he tried to free his employer. He was given primary treatment.

An assistant superintendent of

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Environment ministers adopt biodiversity protection plans

REZAUL KARIM, from The Hague

Environment ministers from 123 countries on Friday adopted a 17-point The Hague Declaration of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity, reconfirming their "commitment to fight deforestation and loss of forest biodiversity".

The ministers came out of a high-level meeting at the Dutch Congress Centre, which began on Wednesday and continued late into Thursday night, with a ten-year action plan, declaring their commitment to "halting biodiversity loss at the global, regional, sub-national and national levels by the year 2010".

They recognised that additional international funding was necessary to facilitate the effective implementation of the plan by developing countries.

The Hague Declaration underscored the need for "clear targets and timetables" to follow up the strategic plan and "put mechanisms in place to reach these targets".

Delegates at the ministerial segment of the two-week Convention on Biological Diversity, which concluded Friday, also called for recognition of strong links between biodiversity and other policy fields at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 26 to September 4.

President of sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) and Dutch State Minister for Environment Geke Faber, who presented the revised ministerial declaration, chaired the daylong session, which unanimously adopted the declaration, on Friday.

Meanwhile, an AFP report adds:

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PHOTO: STAR

Hindu men, women and children take the holy dip in the waters of the Old Brahmaputra near Langalbandi in Narayanganj yesterday in line with the Ashtami Snan rituals.

Shihab murder Court order on acceptance of charge sheet on May 12

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday fixed May 12 for order on acceptance of the charge sheet in connection with the abduction and killing of schoolboy Khondaker Shihab Ahmed.

Magistrate Mohammad Abul Kashem passed the order after the charge sheet was placed before the court for its acceptance.

The court also directed the authorities concerned to place the case diary (CD) on the fixed date.

Detective Branch Inspector Nazrul Islam, Investigation Officer (IO) of the sensational abduction and murder case, submitted the

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addresses a public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

Extortion bid Businessmen block traffic at Kachukhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Businessmen in the city's Kachukhet area yesterday blocked traffic on a road there for more than an hour protesting an extortion bid by a gang of miscreants.

Sources said a gang of miscreants belonging to notorious criminal Kala Jahangir went to the Kachukhet Supermarket at about 11:00 am and demanded a huge amount of money from shop owners.

The miscreants, however, fled the scene in the face of strong resistance by the businessmen and the local people.

The businessmen then came out of their shops and put up a barricade on the road in front of the market. They also damaged at least seven vehicles during their blockade.

Police had to fire several teargas shells to disperse the angry businessmen.

On Thursday, businessmen caught Zahid, member of an organised gang, when he demanded money from the businessmen in the same area.

Bombs hurled inside city school: 5 students hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five students were injured when gangsters hurled crackers inside the compound of Motijheel Model School and College yesterday.

Sources said a gang of unidentified men hurled five crackers inside the school at about 2:15pm when the first term examinations of classes seven and eight were in progress.

Of the injured, Habib Al Rakib and Siddiqur Rahman were admitted to the hospital with injuries from splinters.

ABM Rafiqul Alam, assistant headmaster of the school, filed a case with the Motijheel thana in this connection.

2 kidnapped, 20 houses, shops looted allegedly by BNP men in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

Two people were kidnapped and over 20 houses and shops at a village in Barua upazila looted yesterday in an attack by miscreants.

Over 300 armed cadres conducted the daylong vandalism at Krishnapur village over a land dispute during which the 20 houses were also set ablaze.

The miscreants slaughtered 7-8 cows and arranged a picnic in the local school.

They also allegedly assaulted two local journalists, snatched their camera and mobile phones and detained them for over three hours.

Local BNP leaders were blamed for the attack. Among them were Upazila BNP leader Abdur Rahim, Juba Dal leaders Afjal, Anwar and Mohsin and BNP activists Ayet Ali and his brother Belayet.

The hooligans attacked the village at about 10:00 am exploding bombs and cocktails, sources said.

They looted valuables from the houses and shops of Kabir Hossain, Ali Ashraf, Tojamal, Shahidullah, Abul Kalam, Jakir Hossain, Alamgir Hossain, Rafiqul Islam, Shahkawat Hossain, Alam, Bakul and Bachchu

Mia and abducted Shahidullah and Alam from the spot.

As the newsmen tried to take photograph, the attackers snatched camera and mobile phone from Prothom Alo's photographer M Sadek and district correspondent Nasiruddin at about 12:30 pm.

They allegedly assaulted and detained them and released after over three hours.

Local police failed to contain the violence. The Additional and Assistant SPs reached the spot in the evening.

Boat capsized in Naaf: 3 Rohingyas missing

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Two Rohingya women and one child were missing when the boat carrying them capsized in Naaf river on Friday.

The Teknaf-bound small boat carrying 10 Rohingya people from Arakan of Myanmar sank in the middle of the river in the morning, locals said.

Road accidents kill 8 in Gazipur, Magura

UNB, Dhaka

Eight people were killed and 25 others injured in separate road accidents in Gazipur and Magura districts yesterday and on Friday night.

In Gazipur, four people were killed and 15 injured in two road mishaps on Dhaka-Tangail highway yesterday.

A head-on collision between a pick-up and a bus near Baimail Bridge in the morning left three dead and 14 injured. Identity of the dead could not be known.

In another accident, a Kaliakoir-bound truck rammed a rickshaw at Naojor, killing its passenger Motaleb Sarkar, 38, on the spot. The rickshaw puller was injured.

In Magura, separate road accidents on Friday night killed four people and injured 10 others, hospital sources said.

Two people were killed and nine others injured when a truck hit a rickshaw from behind at Khawal Jhenidah-Jessore road. The

dead were identified as van puller Ramzan Ali, 32, and passenger Afliuddin, 55.

In another accident, Bithi, 8, was run over by a truck at Hazrahati on Magura-Jessore road.

Besides, an old man was killed and a minor girl injured when a speeding truck knocked them down while crossing the road at Ichchakha on Magura-Jhenidah road.

The dead was identified as Shamsel Ali, 60, hailed from Dhani village. Injured Dipa Begum, niece of Shamsel Ali, was admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital.

Our correspondent from Chaudanga reports: At least 100 passengers were injured, 15 of them seriously when a passenger bus overturned and fell into a road side ditch at Boalmari on Chaudanga-Alamdanga road yesterday.

The critically injured passengers were admitted to Chaudanga Sadar Hospital.

Young man shot dead in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified miscreants shot dead a young man at Dakkhinkhan in the city's Uttara area yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Zaved, 26, son of Jalal Uddin and salesman of a spectacles shop at Elephant Road.

Police and family sources said Zaved along with his mother left their Miapara Dakkhinkhan residence at about 9 am.

He came under attack on way to his workplace, leaving his mother at his brother's office at Noddapara.

Sources said a gang of miscreants halted his rickshaw at Sonarkhola in Dakkhinkhan and shot him point blank. He died on the spot.

Being informed by local people, Uttara police rushed to the spot and found Zaved dead. They sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

No case was filed in this connection till filing of this report at 7:30 pm.

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