

Arafat comes out as Israel eases siege

AFP, Ramallah

A beaming Yasser Arafat, hoisted on his bodyguards' shoulders, gave the victory salute yesterday as he emerged from his battle-scarred headquarters after Israeli tanks lifted a 10-day siege.

Hundreds of people, including many bleary-eyed members of the 250-strong entourage who had shared his captivity, roared their approval at the 73-year-old Palestinian leader.

Arafat, wearing his trademark black-and-white checkered head-dress, blew kisses to the crowd before disappearing behind the sandbags still stacked up around the crumbling rear entrance to the three-story building.

It was another of the many close escapes Arafat has had since emerging as Palestinian leader in the 1960s, and capped the final retreat of the tanks and bulldozers which had wreaked so much destruction to a key symbol of his authority.

It was a high point not only for Arafat but also for all the people who were cooped up with him in the cramped, sweltering and increasingly foul-smelling office block where many had feared they would die in an Israeli assault.

"The first thing I want to do is take a bath, even before I see my family," laughed Khaled, an unshaven security officer who was wearing jeans and a striped, short-sleeved shirt.

The scariest moment of the siege was when Israeli bulldozers demolished the east and west wings of the rectangular complex, and those inside were forced into the centre of the block, Khaled said.

"Our biggest fear was that the building would collapse on top of us," he told AFP, giving only his first name.

Israeli bulldozers had demolished every other building in the headquarters compound and much of it resembled a parking lot after the debris had been cleared away.

There were no immediate takers for a pair of ambulances which were on standby to treat the sick and wounded.

But a convoy of lorries carrying fresh fruit and water were greeted eagerly by the aides and security men, who had endured 10 days with only intermittent supplies.

Like many other supporters of Arafat, Khaled said Israeli Prime Minister Sharon had miscalculated by launching the destructive siege on September 19 in retaliation for back-to-back suicide bombings.

"He comes and destroys everything without achieving anything," he said.

Even Israeli analysts acknowledge that the operation boosted the flagging popularity of Arafat, who

had seen his entire cabinet forced to resign earlier this month amid the refusal of MPs to give it a vote of confidence.

Israel pulled back its forces under heavy US pressure to implement a UN Security Council resolution demanding an end to the siege and a pullback to the positions it held before the start of the Palestinian uprising two years ago.

Israeli commanders insisted they would maintain positions not far away from the headquarters to ensure that none of the 41 wanted officials among the 250 holed up inside could get away.

Initially, clusters of Israeli troops maintained checkpoints just outside the entrance to the sprawling compound.

And later in the day, Israel reimposed the curfew that had been in force on Ramallah through all but one day of the siege.

But none of those leaving Arafat's offices seemed afraid of arrest by the Israeli forces.

Half an hour before the Palestinian leader emerged, at least 60 members of his security forces carrying Kalashnikov rifles ran out of the shattered remains of his offices.

They filed through a hole in a barbed wire fence before disappearing into the shell of one of the nearby buildings demolished by Israel, apparently looking for personal belongings they had been forced to abandon.

NRB drugged to death on bus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An expatriate Bangladeshi was allegedly drugged to death on a passenger bus on his way to Dhaka from Madaripur.

Mojibur Rahman, 40, of Agraroshi of Shibchar in Madaripur, and his neighbour Shahidul Islam, 35, were coming to Dhaka. They had reached Mawa by a launch before boarding an air-conditioned bus of Al-Amin Paribahan. Mojibur, who recently returned from Saudi Arabia, was to meet his recruiting agent at Motijheel.

Hospital sources said they took tamarind pickle some unidentified people offered them on the bus. After drugging them unconscious, miscreants took away money and mobile phones from them. When the bus reached the Postagola bridge, a staff of the bus found them unconscious.

They were admitted to a private clinic at Narinda at about 3:30pm. Later, Mojibur was shifted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead. Shahidul was undergoing treatment at the clinic and his condition was stated to be critical.

In another incident, Sabujbagh police recovered a decomposed body of an unidentified young man, which was wrapped in a sack at Manda in the city yesterday noon.

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South Korean Ha Hyung-joo (R) and North Korean Kye Sun-hut light the cauldron of the 14th Asian Games in Busan Stadium during the opening ceremony yesterday.

Judgement in Trisha murder case today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Judgement in the sensational Trisha murder case will be given today.

Gaibandha District and Sessions Judge AKM Anwar Hossain will pronounce the judgement at 11 am, court sources said.

Sadia Sultana Trisha, a student of class four of Madhyapara Government Primary School and daughter of Abdul Malik of V-Aid road area of the district town, jumped into a roadside pond and drowned when chased by three youths named Modern, Shaheen and Asha on July 17 this year.

Police submitted charge sheet against the three on July 22.

The court recorded statements of 24 out of 31 prosecution witnesses.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia awards a gold medal to a child painter at the Child Rights Week 2002 at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the city yesterday.

7 Arabs released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The seven Arab nationals arrested for their alleged links with Islamic militant groups abroad were released yesterday as the allegation could not be proved.

After a series of interrogations in the last five days, Detectives Branch of police produced them before the CMM's court yesterday evening.

The court ordered their release as none of the allegations against them could be proved.

Abu Nujaid of Libya, Abu Ashem of Algeria, Hasan Adam of Sudan, and Sadek Al Nasami, Abu Sallam, Abu Umayya and Abdul Abbas of Yemen, were arrested Monday night

following intelligence reports that they were linked to an Islamic militant group and involved in trafficking of children from Bangladesh.

They were arrested from their Al Hermann Islamic Studies Institute, an NGO, and from their residences at Uttara in the city.

The Arab nationals told interrogators that they could also visit branches of their institute in Dhaka and at Kisoreganj, Rangpur, Niphamari, Gazipur and Netrokona and investigate their activities.

Police also failed to recover any firearm or objectionable leaflet from their possession.

There were intelligence reports

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Dring may leave Dhaka tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Simon Dring, managing director of now closed Ekushey Television (ETV), may leave the country tomorrow.

Simon, who is also one of the investors in ETV, has been asked to leave the country after the Immigration and Passports Office cancelled his visa which was valid till December 2003.

He was summoned to the passport office at Agargaon in the city on Wednesday and served with a notice to leave the country within seven days.

Authorities said that his work

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Political cadres use outlaw identity to collect toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Cadres of political parties are using names of outlawed organisations for extorting money and giving death threats for refusal.

The ugly hands of these extortionists reach all categories of businesses, NGOs and professionals like doctors and engineers. Even academic institutions are not spared.

The situation has created a sense of insecurity among people.

In the last few days, some prominent businessmen of Khulna city got death threats in letters written on

letter pads of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party, said a source in the Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI).

In one such letter, businessman Mohammad Abdur Rahim was asked to pay Tk 50,000 as toll or to face death any moment.

Abdur Rahim secretly contacted a ringleader of PBCP now staying in disguise at a posh residential hotel in the city.

The PBCP leader denied sending the letter to Abdur Rahim or demanding toll from him.

*Cadres of political parties are

blackmailing outlawed organisations for committing crimes including toll collection and murders," said one businessman.

Another leader of KCCI claimed that most of such crimes are now being committed by cadres of political parties and not by outlaws.

The cadres are using letter pads of outlawed parties, printed from presses secretly, they said.

Two young activists of ruling BNP were arrested recently after Acting Registrar of Khulna University Md Amir Ali filed two

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Rallies set to defy Shaheed Minar rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations determined to hold a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar tomorrow afternoon without permission of the Dhaka University (DU) authorities sparked fresh tension.

The organisations under the banner of Bikkhubdhha Nagarik Samaj (BNS) vowed to make the October 1 rally a success.

Tension is feared, as the BNS programme coincided with two others at the same venue by the Bangladesh Community Primary School Teachers' Association and the Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (JASAS), a cultural organisation of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Meanwhile, the DU halls opened yesterday for resident students, with classes scheduled to resume on October 3.

Contacted, Commissioner of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Mohammad Abdul Qaiyum said the DMP would take measures depending on the gravity of the situation. "Police will intervene, if necessary," he said.

The DU, the authority to give permission to rallies at the Shaheed Minar, will decide on the matter, said Qaiyum.

The DMP would take steps, consulting with the university authorities, he added.

The government announced on September 22 that permission of the DU would be required for any rally at

the Central Shaheed Minar.

Meanwhile, different organisations kept issuing statements to protest the decision and make the October 1 rally a success without permission of the DU.

The Jatiya Ainjibi Forum also joined the BNS in the vow to hold the rally.

In a statement, 40 personalities said they would establish the right of free movement at the Shaheed Minar, holding a rally there on October 1.

Writers, artistes and cultural activists will gather in front of the National Museum at 4.00pm tomorrow and march towards the Shaheed Minar to join the rally to be presided over by the language movement veteran Abdul Matin, another statement said.

15 BNP men chargesheeted in Chhabi Rani assault case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Charge sheet in the Chhabi Rani Mondal assault case was submitted to Bagerhat court yesterday accusing 15 leaders and activists of Rampal upazila BNP and Jubo Dal.

Of the accused, three have so far been arrested, while others are at large.

Awami League leader Chhabi Rani Mondal was abducted by the accused on the night of August 21 while she was returning home from Bagerhat town.

According to FIR, she was molested and mercilessly beaten up by the accused.

Chhabi Rani was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital the same night. Necessary medical tests were done which found no evidences of rape and severe internal injuries.

The investigation officer of the case said the trial of the case is expected to begin in the first week of next month.

Chhabi Rani Mondal is still staying in a special cabin at KMCH.

US warplanes bomb Basra airport again

AFP, Baghdad

US aircraft yesterday attacked the international airport at Basra in southern Iraq for the second time in a week, Iraq announced.

"The evil American crows have struck and destroyed the civilian radar system at the airport," a transport ministry spokesman told the official satellite television channel.

The raid on Basra took place at 5:40 a.m. (0140 GMT) and "damaged the main service building, including the departure hall," he added.

Iraq said the airport's civilian radar

system had already been destroyed in a US raid on Wednesday night. Basra airport had also been bombed in August 2001 by US and British forces.

Pentagon officials insisted the target on Wednesday was a mobile air-defence radar that had been targeting US and British aircraft over the past week.

Britain's defence ministry said the Royal Air Force had taken part in the raid.

A military spokesman said an Iraqi was wounded Thursday when civilian and service installations were

bombing in Zi-Qar province about 375 kilometres (225 miles) south of Baghdad.

Iraqi anti-aircraft fire forced the aircraft back to Kuwaiti airspace, he added.

The US and British planes also overflew 15 other locations, the spokesman said.

Baghdad reported on August 27 that the radar system at Mosul airport in northern Iraq was destroyed by US-British planes.

Almost daily skirmishes are reported in "no-fly" zones enforced

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Marchers gather for mass globalisation protest

AFP, Washington

Thousands gathered yesterday to march against the policies of the World Bank and the IMF, a day after riot police swiftly crushed smaller protests and arrested nearly 650 people.

A crowd of at least 5,000 grouped on the Washington Mall to listen to speakers and prepare to march to a downtown square close to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund buildings.

Several hundred people protest-

ing the effect of IMF and World Bank policies on HIV-AIDS victims around the world held a noisy and colourful march as they joined the main rally.

"Pills cost pennies, greed costs lives!" cried Danae Mcelroy, an HIV-AIDS activist who marched with the group.

The activists, many of them beating drums and blowing whistles, stopped outside the US Treasury Department to vent their rage en route to join the main protest group.

Authorities had braced for

20,000 protesters to converge on the capital -- the estimated number of people who showed up for similar protests in April 2000.

Only one-tenth of that number actually materialised at various rallies on Friday, according to local media estimates, although police refused to speculate on numbers.

Organisers said several thousand were expected Saturday.

Inside the IMF and World Bank headquarters, representatives of

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Vegetable shop employee abducted in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Miscreants abducted an employee of a vegetable shop from Sadar hospital area in the district town Saturday night.

Police said a gang of four abducted Apu Dutta, 21, while he was returning home at about 8-45 pm.

Police could not rescue him till 6 pm yesterday.



Captain A K Ghiasuddin Ahmed

Obituary

Captain A K Ghiasuddin Ahmed, a retired Bangladesh Biman pilot, died on September 26 at Suhrawardy Heart Institute in the city. He was 54.

His qulhwani will take place at no. 1 Nawraton Colony, Property Mansion, New Baily Road after Maghrib prayers today.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 30		5-47 pm
Oct 1	5-50 am	

Prayer Timings		
Sept 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-54	6-00
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation