

# Sharon to seek US nod for Gaza plans

REUTERS, London

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom says Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will visit Washington this month to seek US approval for his evolving plan to evacuate the Gaza Strip.

"Still it is not a complete plan," Shalom told a media briefing in London yesterday. "The prime minister would like to complete it...(before)...his meeting with President Bush at the end of March in Washington. He has said he will not do it unless it will be agreed with the Americans first."

A senior Israeli source, who asked not to be identified, said Sharon was considering four options for a withdrawal that is likely to be unilateral because the Israeli leader believes he has no Palestinian negotiating partner.

The options are to leave some Jewish settlements in northern Gaza; evacuate all settlements, but keep a military presence on a border strip with Egypt; keep a military presence in Gaza; or remove all settlements and leave no civilian or military presence in the entire Gaza Strip.

"It looks as if it might be a full evacuation, but it is not agreed yet," the source said, referring to the fourth option.

Sharon has publicly spoken only of evacuating most of the 7,500 Jewish settlers living in Gaza enclaves that are hard to defend and setting a new "security line" in the West Bank.

## Opposition whip

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Abdus Shahid who demanded immediate dissolution of parliament and snap polls.

With her flagged vehicle barred from the cantonment, Hasina had to walk four kilometres to the CMH where the gate was slammed on her face, Faruq told newsmen, adding she did not violate any rules.

A day after Hasina and her party leaders were stopped from visiting Azad, critically wounded in a Friday night machete attack allegedly by hit men with ties to fundamentalists, the cantonment board accused them of breaching the army regulation and the Official Secrets Act 1923 as well.

On confiscation of films and tapes of photojournalists and television crews, Faruq said none of the journalists took photographs of any military establishment and they

## U-19 WC Cricket

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All the batsmen got good starts but none could convert those into big scores. Bashar with 29 was the top scorer in the Bangladesh innings, followed by wicketkeeper Dhiman Gosh, who contributed 23. Nafees Iqbal and his opening partner Naeem Islam chipped in with 21 apiece.

But the batsmen really need a vast improvement if they are to pose a challenge to the Australian's in the March 4 final at the Fatullah Stadium.

Meanwhile, former champions England will take on West Indies in the second Cup semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium this afternoon. The winners will face Pakistan in the final on March 5 at the same venue.

## Khulna mayor

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bomb attacks in the city, dubbed as the valley of death for outlaw violence.

Explosive experts, led by Major Sajjad of Jessore Cantonment, defused the powerful grenade thrown at the mayor's car at the main gate of Khulna City Corporation on Sunday in an assassination bid, in the police station grounds.

The mayor survived the attack unscathed, as the grenade did not explode because of the 'assailants' mistake' to take the pin off the device.

"The bomb was live and powerful. An explosion could have taken a heavy toll," the OC quoted the army explosive experts as telling.

Khulna Metropolitan Police authorities said they were trying to uncover the motive for the attempt on Tayebur's life and would pull out all the stops.

"We hope a major breakthrough in the probe soon," a top

## Essentials prices

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Mohiuddin, a vegetables trader at the Hatirpul market, predicted that the prices of vegetables are most likely to go up from middle of the month as supplies are set to shrink. He however would not cite any reason for the short supply.

"The prices of soyabean oil is becoming dearer every day and currently remains beyond the purchasing capacity of the middle class like us," said Nazma Akhter, a housewife, who came to shop at Hatirpul kitchen market.

The prices of tomato, aubergine, bean, potato, okra and cucumber remained the same as in the previous week.

In Mohammadpur City Corporation market, a kilo of tomato was selling at Tk 10, aubergine Tk 16, bean Tk 12, potato at Tk 7 and okra and cucumber at Tk 16 each.

## 450mw power unit in Sirajganj okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Purchase Committee yesterday approved a \$291m combined cycle power project in Sirajganj to be constructed jointly by the Bangladeshi company Summit and the Power Development Board (PDB).

The Summit Industrial Mercantile Corporation and Associates, which operates the Khulna barge-mount power plant, will pump \$22m into the 450mw project and the PDB will provide land and related infrastructure.

The bulk of the investment will however come from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank and the British donor, CDC.

"This power plant will be set up on build, own, operate (BOO) basis," said State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud. "This is the first joint venture between the government and a private company in the power sector."

Shares of the Sirajganj plant, planned to put in operation by 2007, will also be floated in the market, he said.

On June 14 last year, the PDB picked the lone bidder Summit for the project considering its power tariff offer of 2.7895 cents/ kilowatt hour for a period of 22 years. Summit also offered \$2.4 rate for per unit gas.

This bid suggested that the PDB would hold 40 percent equity of the project by providing land for the power plant. PDB held only 10 percent equity in both Meghnaghat and Haripur projects.

Yesterday's meeting also approved a Tk 70 crore suppliers credit project to set up radio link and a digital telephone exchange in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. A Chinese company will install this system.

The committee however turned down two other projects -- a 300-meter cable bridge on the Surma river and a 'Health Bhaban' in Mohakhaliata cost of Tk 51 crore.

The committee felt construction of such building was unnecessary.

## Khulna outlaw succumbs to injury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Criminal Azim Hossain, 30, who fell sick during interrogation by joint forces at Shitalbari camp, died at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) at 8:30am yesterday.

He was arrested by Joint forces at his house at Ibrahim Mian road under Sonadanga Police Station on February 19 and admitted to the hospital the same day.

Azim's body was handed over to his family after autopsy in presence of a first class Magistrate in the afternoon.

## Azad's health

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Azad regained sense showing marks of improvement in his health, his relatives said they did not know the reason for what they termed 'spreading such disinformation'.

At 3:00pm yesterday, the CID took the docket of the case from Ramna police which will be probed by its Inspector Kazi Abdul Malek.

The CID team visited the scene where Dr Azad was stabbed on his way to Fuller Road house on the Dhaka University campus.

The team also talked to Suman and Meer Jahan who witnessed the incident and are now in safe custody since Friday night.

They also grilled Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Abu Abbas Bhuiyan, who was placed on a five-day remand on Sunday.

## Ashura today

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President Iajudin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khalea Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the eve of Ashura.

Different religious organisations, including Dayem-i Complex Bangladesh and Dewanbag Sharif, have drawn up programmes to observe the day by holding discussions and bringing out Tazia processions in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will air special progra-mmes and national dailies will publish special articles highlighting the significance of the day.

## Morshed

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Regarding the referendum in Taiwan on March 20, he said Taiwan as a province of China cannot go for referendum without the consent of the Chinese government.

Referring to hartal called by some of the opposition parties in the county, he said it has created a serious adverse impact on the country's development process and is a matter of great concern for foreign investors and development partners of the country.

The foreign minister also condemned the heinous attack on Prof Humayan Azad and said the government has been doing everything possible for his proper treatment.

## Cops swoop on workers

FROM PAGE 1

The law enforcers defied requests for calm from senior AL leaders including Abdur Razzak and Rahmat Ali and surged into the AL headquarters in riot gear breaking open the locks.

They forced their way into every room of the five-storey building and beat up the opposition leaders and activists indiscriminately.

Although Nur could not give the direction of the bomb's flight, his colleagues claimed AL activists hurled it dismissing witness accounts that two young men exploded the bomb, coming out of the Pir Yamini market.

As the leaders and activists of the AL and its front organisations were trying to hide in the washrooms and other apparently safe places in the party headquarters, policemen dragged about 150 of them onto their vans after beating.

Coming to the ground floor from upstairs of the AL headquarters with a black bag, police claimed that it contained the arms and explosives, but journalists on the scene reported they saw police to dump some ink pots into a bucket of water from the bag.

As journalists contradicted the police claim, the law enforcers asked

## HC stays Rajuk move to sack staff

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed the Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha) order to sack some of its employees engaged in different projects.

It also issued rule upon the Rajuk to show cause why its letters to the employees should not be declared illegal and void.

On February 19, Rajuk dismissed 372 employees in different projects on advice of the Works Ministry. They were absorbed in projects on no-work, no-pay basis during the present and previous governments.

The court orders came upon separate writs filed by 113 dismissed employees of the Rajuk.

Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud and senior advocate T H Khan appeared for the petitioners while Additional Attorney General Fida M Kamal stood for the government.

Barrister Roka submitted that they had been discharged without assigning any reason. There are two ways to get rid of unwanted employees. Either dismiss them showing reason or terminate them giving termination benefits as per law. But in their case no rules were followed.

## UPDF, PCJSS

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Over 200 gunshots were exchanged in the one and a half-hour gunfight.

As the army and BDR rushed there, the attackers melted through Baiilyachhari and Jaliapara villages of Matiranga.

Villagers said at least three people were bullet-hit during the gunfight.

BDR recovered three bullets of LMG, two of 9mm pistol and 10 of other firearms -- all used -- after the incident.

Details of yesterday's half-an-hour gunfight could not be known. Security has been tightened in the area, said BDR sources.

Meanwhile, unknown miscreants captured jeep driver Fazar Ali for extortion when he went to Pilak area for wood and released him after two hours.

## Four suspects

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President of Bangladesh Football Federation, was killed in a hail of bullets outside the club in Dhanmondi residential area. Two policemen and an ansar commander were also injured in the incident.

Family members however ruled out business rivalry as a reason for his murder. They said Piaru was a cardiac patient and gradually withdrew himself from active involvement in business. So, there was no possibility of any dispute with him over business.

The victim's brother filed a murder case with Dhanmondi Police Station yesterday evening without accusing anybody.

Piaru's body was handed over to his family yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, different political parties including the Awami League and sports organisations yesterday condemned the killing of Piaru and demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

The other parties and organisations are Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Abahani Limited, Mohammedan Sporting Club, Bangladesh Cricket Board, Swadhin Bangla Football Team, Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association, Brothers Union and Bangladesh Olympic Association.

## US arms experts

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kept there, police sources said.

The US team is likely to visit Cox's Bazar and other places in Chittagong region, sources said.

Paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles and army personnel seized the arms from bordering districts of Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati.

The weapons experts team is visiting Chittagong apparently to get information on arms smugglers, who are dodging arrest, and their routes for smuggling the advanced firearms into Bangladesh, sources said.

them to leave the scene.

Hasina's motorcade was obstructed at Science Laboratory, Shahbagh, Matshya Bhaban crossings and at Zero Point, before she reached the headquarters to be cordoned off by policemen amid the brownout.

Talking to reporters on the scene lit up by a rechargeable light, she said the drama was staged to divert the nation's attention from the attack on prominent writer Humayun Azad.

She accused the prime minister, home minister and state minister for home of masterminding the scheme to unleash policemen on opposition activists.

The home minister in the Jatiya Sangsad statement said eight to 10 bombs were hurled at the police from the AL headquarters.

He also focussed on the arms recovery and said: "We'll not tolerate any attack on police. Soon we'll arrest the people responsible for the attack."

Colleagues rushed Nur to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he was undergoing treatment.

Doctors said he was out of danger.

"I don't know where the bomb came from," Nur told The Daily Star.

## SSC examinee abducted in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A gang yesterday abducted an SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examinee at Bheramara in Kushtia.

Led by Gama, a notorious criminal of the area, a five-member gang picked up Mahmuda. Khatun Mukta, daughter of Mohidul Islam, into a microbus at Sonaulah Para when she was going to Bheramara Pilot High School at about 9:00am, police said.

The microbus swiftly left the area with the 15 years old girl, police added.

A case was lodged with Bheramara Police Station but police failed to nab any of the abductors or recover the SSC examinee till the writing of this report at 6:00 last evening.

## Garment factory vandalised in Khilgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hoodlums yesterday ransacked a garment factory and stabbed at least 20 workers at Rampura in Khilgaon.

Six of the injured -- Enayet Hossain, 22, Monsur, 23, Kuddus, 21, Ibrahim, 24, Azahar, 22, and Shamim, 30 -- were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), while others received first aid.

The injured told our DMCH correspondent that a gang of around 20 entered the Rupa Sweater Factory at East Rampura in Banasree Road in the afternoon and beat up the guard.

Divided in several groups, the gang vandalised some of the machinery and furniture in the rooms on all six floors and injured the male workers.

The attackers who belong to Rohit-group had demanded 10 sweaters from the factory owner for free last week, the injured added.

Khilgaon police could not give any detail about the incident.

## First sign

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Jali predicted a more concrete alliance with the parties shortly.

Announcing the general strike, JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu was optimistic that the progressive opposition political parties would soon be able to forge a greater unity.

Saturday's hartal would be the fifth in the last one month, with the AL enforcing the first four hartals on February 12, 14, 16 and 28.

Making declaration of the daylong general strike, CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan demanded immediate arrest of Azad's assailants and removal of the BNP-Jamaat ruling alliance.

Earlier yesterday, top AL leaders held separate dialogues with the CPB, WP, Gono Forum, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal in a bid to form a greater-uto-governmental alliance.

## Noise pollution

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hearing-impaired patients can be recovered with medical and surgical treatment or hearing aid, he added.

"Early detection of the disease betters the chance for increased listening for the patients," he said.

He also suggested the people to take MMR vaccine for prevention against mumps, measles, and rubella diseases, which cause hearing impairment.

Prof Amin also urged the government to prohibit selling, without prescription of a qualified physician, of Ototoxic drugs, which cause irreparable hearing disability.

Schmidt, a speech therapist at the SAHIC, urged authorities concerned to be aware of horrific and catastrophic consequences of noise pollution.

Among others, Prof Mizanur Rahman, director general of health services directorate, and Prof M Jalis, South-East Asian regional representative of International Federation of Oto-Rhino-Laryngological Society, attended the seminar.

## RCC mayor calls for unity to combat outlaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu yesterday called upon all major political parties of Rajshahi to unite against the 'unseen terrorists' who threatened journalists with death.

"We are all brothers. The Awami League, BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party should unite to fight the outlaws," he said at a press conference organised on the eve of a visit by Norwegian city mayor, Jan Oddver Skisland, to Rajshahi.

"You (journalists) should not be afraid, heroes are always brave, they die only once," Minu said. "We will definitely find out the culprits who were threatening from behind the scene."

The Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) is likely to reach the city on March 7 and they will clamp down against the miscreants, he said.

Outlaws of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party threatened 11 Rajshahi journalists with death through a letter on February 8.

Sources said that outlaws also gave similar threat on the life of the Rajshahi mayor a week before.

## Tofail to face trial on corruption charges

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League presidium member Tofail Ahmed is to face trial on corruption charges in connection with DAP fertilizer project he finalised during his tenure as Industries Minister.

The High Court (HC) yesterday discharged its rule to quash proceedings of the Divisional Special Judge's Court, paving the way for trial.

The HC bench comprising Justice Sheikh Rezwani Ali and Justice AFM Ali Asgar delivered its verdict setting aside the stay on the proceeding of the trial court.

On June 24, 2002, Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) filed a case with Motijheel police against Tofail Ahmed and former ERD Secretary Moshirur Rahman for adopting the DAP fertilizer project under suppliers credit from China for their personal gains. The contract has allegedly caused a loss of Tk 8.57 crore to the state.

Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud appeared for Tofail while Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezzak Khan stood for the state.

## SSC exams

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Education Board.

"All necessary steps have been taken for holding the exams in a smooth manner and we believe that the forthcoming SSC examinations will be held in a cheating-free environment," Education Minister Osman Faruk told reporters at a press conference yesterday.

State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon warned against cheating in the exams. He said all-out measures have been taken to contain cheating at the centres.

Teachers will frisk the examinees before entry to the centres and local political leaders, student leaders and members of the school managing committee will

not be allowed to enter the exam centres.

Education Secretary Khandokar Shahidul Islam, Director General of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Mohammad Junaid, Acting Chairperson of Dhaka Education Board Shaheda Obaid and chairmen of different boards were, among others, present at the press conference in the conference room of the education ministry.

In reply to a question, the education minister said the government has no plan to bring change in the current grading system.

He said adequate measures have also been taken to prevent question paper leak.

## TUs at EPZs

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working to resolve the issue and the progress has been positive.

The committee was formed after the government failed to live up to its commitment on allowing trade unionism in the export processing zones from January 2004.

The US had agreed to extend the deadline for another two months time a government request, which had assured Washington that the committee would draw up a common formula to ensure the rights of the workers and a congenial atmosphere for the investors in the export processing zones (EPZ).

The World Bank sources also told the Daily Star that they had been working on the issue and made significant progress.

The issue of allowing trade union activities in the EPZs turned critical after the foreign investors threatened to pull out if trade unionism were allowed in their factories.

The foreigners, mainly from South Korea and Japan, have invested around \$600 million in two prominent EPZs in Dhaka and Chittagong that employ around 1.30 lakh Bangladeshis. Four other new EPZs are eyeing millions in investment and a massive employment generation.

## Intellectuals for erasing

FROM PAGE 1

clinging on to books and pens. We have to think of some new things."

He said the intellectual community should come forward to helping people force their way out of such a unfortunate state and backwardness.

Professor Kabir Chowdhury said, "This government has the typical characteristics of a fascist government. It should be unseated. We can no longer wait for the political parties to unite. All progressive people with good sense must unite now."

Professor Mustafa Nur-ul-Islam also urged the political parties to unite. "Please forget your differences and decide what should be done. Trust us, we are with you."

"The country has been taken over by barbarians and seized by rajakars," writer and playwright Syed Shamsul Haq noted. He alleged that Khalea Zia (BNP chief) and Motiur Rahman Nizami (Jamaat-e-Islami chief) instigated the attack on Prof Azad and urged the teacher community to observe the general strike and abstain from work like the teachers of Dhaka University.

Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, drawing attention to the attack on Prof Azad and other writers and journalists, said, "Armed people have waged a war against the unnamed people. (And) Khalea-Ziama clique are aiding and abetting the armed people."

He urged the people to come out on the streets and seize the Secretariat.

Artist Prof Rafiqun Nabi, Prof Mir Mobasher Ali, former DU vice-chancellor Prof Azad Chowdhury, Prof Ajoy Roy, Prof ASM Arefin Siddiqui, writer Shahriar Kabir, Prof Muntasir Mamun, Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury and Dr Kazi Faruk Ahmed also spoke at the rally.

Our Dhaka University (DU) spokesperson reports: The DU campus continued to boil with rage yesterday over Friday's grisly attack on Dr Humayun Azad.

Throughout the day, the campus roared with rallies and protest demonstrations where thousands of students, teachers, political leaders and activists reiterated their demand for the resignation of Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury.

Demonstrators also burnt an effigy of the home minister for failing to prevent the attack on the eminent writer and urged the government to ensure the best possible treatment for Azad and the security of his family.

The DU Teachers' Association (Duta) observed a token sit-in on the campus.

Leaders of political parties and student organisations, cultural and

human-rights activists, members of the civil society and professional bodies gathered at a big rally at the Central Shaheed Minar organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote.

"We must oust this communal and fundamentalist government that killed the country's intellectuals in 1971 and has now attacked Dr Azad," Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil told the rally.

Monzurul Ahsan Khan, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Asaduzzaman Noor, Poet Syed Shamsul Haque, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Abed Khan, Duta President Arefin Siddique, Kamal Lohani, Ramendu Majumder, Mamunur Rashid and Ayesha Khanam also addressed the rally.

Language veteran Abdul Matin, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Prof Anu Muhammad, Prof Akmal Hossain, poet Samudra Gupta, film producer Shahin Akhtar, dramatist Rahan Chowdhury and writers Nurunabi, Moshul Alam and Benzin Khan addressed another protest rally in front of the National Museum and demanded immediate arrest of and punishment to the real culprits.

Students under the banner of 'Muktachinta Rakha O Aganatantrik Shokti Protirodh Humayan Azad Mancha' will observe a token sit-in today at the foot of the Aparaajeyo Bangla.

Demanding arrest of the real culprits, the AL-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League during a press conference at the DU Journalists' Association yesterday threatened an indefinite strike at all educational institutions across the country if the government did not release within 48 hours BCL leader Abbas arrested in connection with the attack on Dr Azad.

JSD (Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal)-backed BCL and Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri have called a strike at all educational institutions on March 3. They will also stage countrywide demonstrations today.

Left-leaning 11-party alliance, Bangladesh Workers Party and the JSD also held separate protest rallies in the city.

## 80pc capital

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AKM Khورشed Alam, advisor of the CLNB presented a paper on environmental issues.

Speakers included the environment and forest secretary and Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon General Secretary Abu Naser Khan.

## German financier

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