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Arafat laid to rest as world bids farewell

AP, AFP, Ramallah

Yasser Arafat was laid to rest in a marble-and-stone grave yesterday after his flag-draped coffin was borne through a sea of emotional Palestinians who swarmed the helicopter that brought him from a state funeral in Egypt.

Police fired wildly into the air to keep back the surging crowd at the West Bank compound known as the Muqata, where Arafat spent his last years as a virtual prisoner.

After Arafat's body was lowered into the ground, Muslim clerics read Quranic verses and the late leader's bodyguards wept and embraced

each other.

Officials tried for 25 minutes to open the helicopter door to remove the coffin onto a jeep that had ploughed through a dense throng of weeping mourners to clear a path.

As the coffin was carried toward the gravesite, police jumped on top of it, waved their arms and flashed

the victory sign. People chanted, "With our blood and soul we will redeem you Yasser Arafat!"

Two people who had been trampled in the melee were carried away on stretchers.

Mahmoud Abbas, the new head of the PLO, and Omar Suleiman, SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



The flag-draped coffin of Yasser Arafat being carried through a sea of emotion-charged Palestinians at Muqata, the Palestinian leader's headquarters at Ramallah, West Bank, for burial. PHOTO: AFP

Kala Jahangir's aide killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged associate of Kala Jahangir and local ringleader Shahar Ali died in 'crossfire' between his aides and police strike forces Cheetah and Cobra in Kafrul yesterday, eight hours after he was taken out from the Dhaka Central Jail.

With two bullets in the chest, Monir alias Bauwa Monir, 25, accused in four murder cases, died on the spot.

Monir, arrested by police from Khilgaon area in the city on October 17 was granted bail on November 10.

"We went to receive Monir at the jail gate as he was scheduled to come out on bail Thursday afternoon. But after waiting for some time, we came to know from the jailer that Cheetah and Cobra men picked him up from inside the jail minutes before iftar," said Monir's

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Eid tomorrow if moon sighted today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest religious festival of the Muslims, will be celebrated all over the country tomorrow if the Shawal moon is sighted today.

If not, the Eid will be celebrated on Monday ending a 30-day month of Ramadan when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset under religious dictates.

Sources at the Meteorological Office told The Daily Star last night there is some possibility of sighting the Shawal moon this evening.

Islamic Foundation sources said

the National Moon Sighting Committee will sit at six this evening to see the moon and also to receive information about moon sighting from across the country. State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan will chair the meeting.

Meanwhile, thousands of people have already left the capital for their village homes to celebrate the Eid with their loved ones. Trains, launches and buses had a heavy rush of homebound passengers yesterday as on the previous day.

A six-day vacation began on

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HOLIDAY

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed for three days from today on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Fitr. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper on November 14, 15 and 16.

However, if Eid is celebrated on Monday, November 15, then the following day, Tuesday, November 16, will be considered a holiday. In that case, the newspaper will not come out on Wednesday, November 17, as well.

Extortion peaks as Eid nears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the Eid neared, the business people and professionals of the city saw its mafiosi and corrupt police become more and more pressing and reckless in exacting tolls.

Crooks known as members of 'phone gangs' also joined in the game posing as dreaded gangsters and demanding money over telephone. Some of their prime targets were doctors, bankers, executives of private companies, and even journalists.

A gang in Pallabi gunned down a wholesale rice trader, Haji Delwar Hossain, last Wednesday, during busy market hours in Rupnagar as

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Mid-term change of govt must follow constitution

Patterson says refuting press reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Torkel Patterson yesterday said his Thursday's statement was not that the government must see out its full term but that any mid-term change of government should be made in accordance with constitutional provisions.

"I did not say the government has to finish its term... Any action against the government must be

done according to the constitution," Patterson said refuting some press reports.

He also admitted that one of the important things the US could do for Bangladesh was to allow greater market access to its exports, but no specific mechanism or terms and conditions for that have been looked into yet.

He said the purpose of his second visit in a six-week span of time was

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Hepatitis cases on the rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Viral hepatitis infection is increasing in the capital with hospitals and clinics reporting a nearly four-fold rise in admission of such patients.

Hepatitis infection primarily affects liver causing inflammation of it and turns critical in chronic cases.

In the last two weeks, more than 1,500 cases of hepatitis infection, commonly spread through contaminated blood transfusions and poor sanitation practices, have been

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Tribute to an undying flame

MAHFUZ ANAM

As a lifelong foe Ariel Sharon's reaction to Yasser Arafat's death was understandable though not forgivable. However President Bush's was neither. Even in Arafat's death he could not bring himself to mention him by name and say anything remotely respectful. "A significant moment in Palestinian history" was all a White House statement said. As the world's only superpower, as the country that did and will play a crucial role in any future Middle East

peace and as the leader upon whom so much of the future of that region depends, President Bush should have shown a greater openness of mind. A figure of history cannot be judged purely by one's own personal feelings or attitude. Forty years of his role as the Palestinian leader cannot be ignored without revealing either one's deep-rooted bias or ignorance.

Did the US President see the scenes of Arafat's burial at Ramallah? Did he see the more formal funeral ceremony in Cairo? If so many Arab and world leaders felt the need to be present in Cairo then Arafat definitely was worth being mentioned by name by the US President. Even if for nothing else but as a mark of minimum respect for the Palestinian people President Bush should have expressed a modicum of courtesy at the demise of Yasser Arafat. Let there be no doubt in the US President's mind that the people present at the Ramallah burial ceremony were but only a fraction of the people who would have liked to be there if situation permitted. The man he could not bring himself to show respect to was indeed a man respected by most of

the world.

It appears that Arafat's biggest sin was that he did not betray his people. In fact some Palestinian groups accuse him of having done exactly that for concessions he made for the sake of what he used to repeatedly term a "just peace". His biggest move for peace lay in the fact that he was able to carry his people in accepting Israel's right to exist side by side with a Palestinian state. This was a most significant move towards lasting peace for which Arafat has never been given due credit. Today it may look almost as a given but when he was able to accept it and carry his people with him, it was a very significant development. And only he could have done it.

He signed the Oslo accord and a peace accord with Israel and went for that famous handshake at the White House lawn and yet former President Bill Clinton blames him for missing that 'historic opportunity' for peace. What was the issue on which Arafat finally refused? It was the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland from which they were driven out. As one

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