

# Suicide bomber kills 3 in Israeli resort

AFP, Tel Aviv

A suicide bomber blew himself up in a bakery in Israel's Red Sea resort of Eilat yesterday, killing three people in the first such attack inside the Jewish state in nine months.

"After examining the site of the explosion a connection was found between the explosives and one of the bodies and we now believe the explosion was caused by a suicide bomber," national police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP.

"This was a terror-related incident." An anonymous caller claimed the attack – the first ever in Eilat – in a telephone call to AFP on Sunday, saying three Palestinian militant groups, but his claim could not be authenticated.

Israeli police had earlier said the powerful blast, which ripped through the Lehaim Bakery next to a small shopping centre in Eilat at 9:40 am local time, had been an accident.

Rosenfeld said three people were killed in addition to the bomber, who had gone into the bakery carrying the bomb in a backpack and then set it off.

Human remains were splattered outside the bakery, television images showed, as dozens of police and rescuers swarmed the ruins of the building.

"The explosion was massive and the whole place is wrecked," a paramedic from the Magen David Adom medical services told AFP.

It was the first attack inside Israel since April 17, 2006, when nine people were killed in Tel Aviv in a suicide bombing claimed by the Palestinian radical group Islamic Jihad.

The Eilat attack came amid tentative efforts to put the Middle East peace process back on track but also against a backdrop of deadly Palestinian factional fighting in the Gaza Strip that has left 32 people dead in four days.

Several people were treated for shock, but the blast did not leave anyone wounded, Roy Rosenfeld, a Magen David Adom spokesman who was among the first to arrive on the scene, told AFP.

"The shop itself is destroyed, but there is not much damage outside," he said.

In a telephone call to AFP in Ramallah, an anonymous spokesman claimed responsibility on behalf of the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, the Fatah-linked Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the previously unknown Army of Believers.

But the authenticity of his claim could not be independently verified and no official statement was released as is frequently the case after suicide attacks inside Israel.

Roadblocks were set up outside Eilat, which lies on the southern-most tip of Israel on the border with Egypt and Jordan, and senior Israeli security officials were rushing to the scene, Israeli radio reported.

Israeli officials were quick to condemn the attack.

"At this stage it is unclear what the origin of the attack is," Miri Eisin, spokeswoman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, told AFP. "Israel is a

nation that is continuously confronting terror and terror threats. Israel is always on guard against such attacks."

Foreign ministry spokesman Mark Regev told AFP that the "authorities are still trying to get details on the origin of the bomber and how he got through. It is clear that the terror threat is very real and very present."

A top aide to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Abed Rabbo, also slammed the bombing.

"We reject these acts and we do not believe that they are in the interest of the Palestinian cause and that they blacken the image of the Palestinian people," Abed Rabbo told AFP by telephone from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where he and Abbas were attending an African Union summit.

The last suicide bombing in Tel Aviv left nine people dead and dozens wounded after a Palestinian bomber blew himself up next to a fast food stand at lunchtime.

Israel has been wracked by a wave of suicide bombings that reached their peak during the Palestinian uprising that broke out in September 2000.

Tuesday's attack comes just days before the international quartet for Middle East peace is to meet in Washington on February 2 and ahead of a planned meeting between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and Olmert.

In August 2005, one of a barrage of rockets fired from the neighbouring Jordanian port of Aqaba in an Al-Qaeda claimed attack against a US warship landed next to the airport in Eilat.

## Major shakeup

**FROM PAGE 1** inspector general (DIG) to Police Headquarters (PHQ).

Faruq Ahmed was made commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP), Moniruzzaman additional commissioner of DMP, Sohrah Hossain commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP), Fatema Begum was made DIG of SB, Khan Sayeed Hassan commissioner of Barisal Metropolitan Police (BMP) and Mazharul Haq was made commandant of Police Training College, Tangail.

Benazir Ahmed was made DIG to PHQ, Najibur Rahman DIG of Armed Police Battalion (APBn), Saiful Alam DIG of Highway Police, AKM Shahidul Haq DIG of Rajshahi Range and Syed Tawfiq Uddin Ahmed was made additional DIG of Dhaka.

Meanwhile, in a reshuffle in the army, DG of SSF Major General Syed Fatehmi Ahmed Rumi has been made GOC of Rangpur region while GOC of Bogra Major General Sheikh Munirul Islam new DG of SSF, according to the UNB.

According to a reliable source, BMA Commandant Brig General Shamim has been made GOC of Bogra.

# No interference

**FROM PAGE 1** Earlier on Sunday, editors of national newspapers, news agencies and television channels, and senior journalists categorically told Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain that they would not abide by the restrictions imposed on the media by the emergency rules.

"The government is deeply aware of the very positive role the media has been playing during the current critical period in the nation's history," reads the home ministry clarification.

The government is also profoundly concerned about the need for preserving freedom of the press even under these circumstances, it said. "However, it has been brought to the notice of the government that there exist some questions in certain quarters about the possibility of curtailing press freedom on account of the above gazette."

The clarification went on, "The government wishes to reiterate unequivocally that no restrictions have been imposed on the media's freedom or functions. However, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the government will soon invite media representatives to discuss in order to reach a workable solution on the issue."

Reazuddin Ahmed, editor of the News Today, said he is happy that the government has clarified its position saying that it has imposed no restriction on the media.

"But the 5th clause in the Emergency Power Rules 2007 which is hanging upon the media as a sword should be withdrawn," he said.

The clause is a 'sleeping tiger' that may wake up and bite anytime, he added.

Welcoming the proposal of discussion, Editor of the Jugantor Abed Khan said, "It is possible to ensure press freedom through discussion, while not compromising on the question of fundamental rights. And we will try for it in the proposed discussion."

Aiqullah Khan Masud, Editor of the Jankanta, noted that the present caretaker government did not require imposing the clause regarding media restriction as the media cooperated with the government from the very beginning.

"The press cannot be controlled by imposing any rule that may rather

## Ashura today

**FROM PAGE 1** was brutally slaughtered. The bizarre incident happened at Karbala in Iraq.

According to Islamic history, this dispute was a result of a disagreement among Muslims on the question of succession after the demise of Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph.

The day is a public holiday. Various organisations will arrange programmes in observance of Ashura. Tazia procession by mourners is a main feature of the occasion.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

They urged the people to exercise such spirit of sacrifice in national life to achieve social peace and well-being.

They also prayed for salvation of the departed souls of the martyrs who laid down lives at Karbala.

## 14-party urges

**FROM PAGE 1** credible election as early as possible. Showing our respect to his pledge, we urge him to hand over power to an elected government through holding an election after reconstituting the election commission and completing other necessary work related to the election," Abdul Jalil told journalists at a press briefing last night.

Jalil, the 14-party coordinator, also said at the briefing at his Gulshan residence that the 14-party alliance sat to review the present situation of the country and to convey their message to the CG and to the people.

Prior to the briefing, the 14-party held a meeting there to review the latest situation of the country. AL presidium member Abdur Razzak chaired the meeting.

Jalil, also AL general secretary, demanded the CG arrest all top corrupt individuals immediately.

He urged the CA to implement his promise of taking stern action to root out corruption from the country.

He also urged the CA to establish rule of law in the country through taking stern action against the criminals and their godfathers.

Senior 14-party leaders including Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Kazi Zafarullah, Obaidul Quader, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Bimal Biswas, Dilip Barua, Syed Zafar Sazzad, Haji Abdus Samad were present at the meeting among others.

## Butenis

**FROM PAGE 16** Pakistan, Butenis took up her Bangladesh assignment only about a year ago.

"Once the President has designated a successor to Ambassador Butenis, the Department of State will do everything possible to ensure a smooth transition," the release added.

Patricia Butenis was confirmed as Ambassador to Bangladesh by the Senate on February 16, 2006, and sworn in on March 17, 2006. She is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, at the rank of Minister-Counsellor. Prior to her assignment in Bangladesh, Butenis was Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Islamabad (2004-2006).

Butenis joined the Foreign Service in 1980. She served as Vice Consul in Karachi (1980-82), Vice Consul/ Political Officer in San Salvador (1982-85), Consul in New Delhi (1985-88), El Salvador Desk Officer (1988-90) and Consul (American Citizen Services Chief) in Bogota, Colombia (1990-93).

She attended the National War College (1993-94) and served at the Visa Office, Field Liaison, in the Department of State (1994-97). She then served as Consul General in Warsaw (1998-2001) and Consul General in Bogota, Colombia (2001-04).

Butenis was born in New Jersey. She received a BA in anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania and an MA in International Relations from Columbia University.

## 290 structures

**FROM PAGE 1** drive around 10:00am and finished their work for the day at 4:30pm. A substantial number of armed police were beside them during the drive.

The BIWTA on Monday started an eight-day-long drive to demolish 650 illegal structures and evict land grabbers along the banks of the Buriganga and Turag.

The Turag has already narrowed substantially due to land grabbing by filling up the river. Environmentalists have demanded the demarcation of the river. The BIWTA authorities said that they have plans to plant trees along the river after their demolition drive ends.

Sources working with BIWTA said they would keep a close watch on the bank so that nobody encroaches again.

It being a public holiday, there will be no BIWTA eviction drive today.

# Yunus slates 'financial apartheid'

**FROM PAGE 1**

Referring to the menace of terrorism, he said, "we have to fight terrorism but not through military action, but by addressing its root cause, which is poverty."

By giving collateral-free loan of over six billion dollars to seven million people in Bangladesh, 97 percent of whom are women, the Grameen Bank has proved that the poorest of the society is bankable and credit-worthy, Prof Yunus observed.

The Nobel laureate pointed out that 58 percent of Grameen Bank's borrowers have risen above the poverty line after receiving loans and the bank has not taken any money from donors since 1995.

"Micro-credit," he said, "has created a silent and non-violent revolution."

The Grameen Bank has focused on women because loan given through them has made a "deeper impact" on their families and because women should have a greater role in decision-making in families, Prof Yunus said.

Bangladesh has made major strides in cutting down infant mortality rates, women's empowerment and telecom sector and "we are now working on to bring information and communication technology," he said adding "We are looking at India in this regard."

The Nobel laureate chose the occasion to announce that Grameen Bank would be opening an office in Mumbai – the first in India – in the next few days.

Yunus noted that Gandhiji's historical Satyagraha movement of peaceful and passive resistance has changed the history of not only the sub-continent but of the entire world adding that his messages are as important to the world today as ever.

Elaborating the idea of social business, he said that it should be

based on no-loss and no-dividend principles and profit earned should be ploughed back into the business. Through social business, all social-economic problems and the problems of 60 percent of the global population living below poverty line can be addressed, he observed adding that the rich individuals and families of the world would find it attractive.

Yunus said that he was a firm advocate of developing Chittagong as a regional port and aviation hub to provide maritime and air links with Southeast Asia.

He also rooted for an international highway through Bangladesh connecting the Saarc countries with Asean nations like – Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

The Grameen Bank chief also proposed cooperation among the Saarc countries in harnessing the water resources of the South Asian region for hydro-electric power projects.

Earlier, inaugurating the two-day conference, Congress President and India's ruling United Progressive Alliance chief Sonia Gandhi said Satyagraha movement has changed the course of history and is a completely new tool to bring about social and political changes and for mass mobilisation.

"The core of Gandhiji's philosophy reverberates through the world more strongly today than ever before," she said.

Pointing out that the end of the Cold War has not brought about peace to the extent desired, Sonia said the world today is faced with the problem of terrorism – religious, ethnic and political.

While the underlying causes behind terrorism have to be understood, it should not be rationalised or romanticised, she noted.

The Congress chief said Gandhiji, while espousing Satyagraha, never claimed to be

saying something new nor did he say that this would provide answers to all problems. "The challenge before us is to creatively evolve Satyagraha to suit our times," she added.

Referring to the weapons of mass destruction, Sonia said India was forced to acquire them after the failure to convince the world about the need for complete nuclear disarmament.

In his speech, Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee commended Yunus's idea of social business and said that it is akin to Mahatma Gandhi's idea of justice in economic development.

Several Nobel laureates, heads of state and government, ministers, parliamentarians, leading academics, civil society leaders and Gandhian thinkers are taking part in the conference.

Themes of the conference include conflict resolution, peace-building, poverty-alleviation, disarmament, social development, empowerment and dialogues between peoples and cultures.

Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who symbolised anti-apartheid regime in South Africa along with Nelson Mandela, leading Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, Gandhi peace prize-winner from Sri Lanka AT Ariyaratne and Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter Ela Gandhi are among the participants in the conference.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will deliver the concluding address today and adopt a "Satyagraha Centenary Declaration."

An exhibition on the life of Mahatma Gandhi and the progress of Satyagraha that started in South Africa is also being held on the occasion.

## Envoys meet

**FROM PAGE 1** government would take necessary steps to create an atmosphere for holding a free, fair and credible election with participation of all political parties.

The envoys expressed the hope that the democracy and good governance would be further strengthened in the country in the days ahead.

The chief adviser told the envoys "necessary steps are being taken to create a congenial atmosphere to hold a free, fair and credible election."

The envoy said if the government seeks any help to carry out development and economic activities, they are ready to extend their cooperation.

The chief adviser thanked them for their good gestures and told them that if needed, the government would seek their assistance.

## CBA leaders

**FROM PAGE 16** of emergency was imposed in the country.

In Bogra, joint forces led by the army arrested Bogra District Jubo League secretary Sagar Kumar Roy for his alleged involvement in criminal activities.

The army in Chittagong arrested seven people including a former Union Parishad chairman and a former UP member for their involvement in different criminal activities. Joint forces of army and police busted 14 money exchange counters in Moulvibazar under Sylhet and arrested nine people while they seized currencies worth Tk 70 lakh.

In the meantime, detained former Jatiya Chhatra League president Jahangir Sattar Tinku, who had close ties with Hawa Bhaban, was in army custody till last evening. The army picked him up from his Moghbazar residence on January 24.

## Graft cases

**FROM PAGE 16** directed the authorities to create eight new posts for the purpose, the prosecution said.

An official of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) filed the case against Ershad on February 29, 1992 and the investigation officer (IO) pressed charges against him on September 15, 1994.

In the second case field with the same police station, it was alleged that the former president, defying the authorities' decision, directed to accept donation from France instead of Finland for setting up 'microwave telephone lines' in 49 upazilas.

Due to Ershad's unilateral decision, the government had to pay Tk 28 crore to France in interest, as the plan was not implemented finally, sources said.

A Bac official Upendra Chandra Das filed the case against Ershad and two others in this connection on September 5, 1992. The IO pressed charges against Ershad and six others on July 31, 1995.

Earlier, Ershad was discharged and acquitted of four graft cases in August and September last year following his announcement to join the four-party alliance.

Another Dhaka court on January 17 this year freed Ershad from serving out the sentence given by the High Court on December 14 last year in connection with a Japanese boat purchase case.

# 6 more killed

**FROM PAGE 16**

Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah offered on Sunday to hold talks in the Muslim holy city of Mecca to stop the "disgraceful" fighting, a proposal welcomed by faction leaders.

"I invite my brothers of the Palestinian people, represented by their leaders... to a quick meeting in their brotherly homeland Saudi Arabia ... to discuss their differences without any intervention from outside parties," he said in an appeal carried by the state news agency SPA.

The ruling Hamas movement's political supremo Khaled Meshal and the Fatah party leader, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, both welcomed the offer, though no date for the meeting has yet been announced.

Several previous efforts to end the feuding, including a rare meeting between Meshal and Abbas in Damascus, have proved in vain.

Prime minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas, locked in a bitter power struggle with Abbas, on Sunday urged an end to the conflict, which spilled over into the occupied West Bank.

"We call on all the Palestinian people to protect national unity, to make the language of dialogue and reason prevail, to withdraw weapons from the streets, and put an end to the tensions," he said.

But the killings and tit-for-tat kidnappings continued in both the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank.

On Sunday, Fatah supporters, many of them masked, set ablaze the Nablus offices of the Hamas-controlled education ministry and kidnapped 11 Hamas members.

Hamas militants also kidnapped the chief of the Palestinian security forces for Gaza, general Shabn Abu Assar, but released him after two hours.

Thirty Palestinians, including young children, have been killed and nearly 100 wounded since late Thursday, according to medics.

Among the victims were an 11-year-old boy snared in the crossfire Saturday night and a two-year-old child killed by a stray bullet during a firefight in Khan Yunis on Friday.

Throughout Gaza, the warring factions have set up roadblocks and continue to trade bursts of machine-gun fire, and anti-rocket and mortar shells. The territory has become deserted as shopkeepers board up shops and stay in the relative safety of their homes.

## ECs may be asked

**FROM PAGE 16** Bangabhaban tomorrow and submit their resignation letters, Modabbir said, "There are some official and confidential matters that cannot be revealed. We also have our privacy."

He, however, reiterated that he would consider his resignation if the president asked him to resign.

Election Commissioner Saiful Alam also echoed Modabbir while talking to reporters while Election Commissioner Mahmud Hasan Mansur refused to make any comments in this regard.

The acting CEC and other election commissioners looked dejected and gloomy yesterday.

"I have been working with him for many days, but today (Monday) I saw him very sad and upset," said one of the commissioner's personal stuffing anonymity.

"He seemed troubled and frustrated, he did not talk much," said another staff of the EC while talking to The Daily Star.

# Death toll rises

**FROM PAGE 16** sketchy and the origins of the fighters unclear. An Iraqi army source said some of the dead wore headbands declaring themselves a "Soldier of Heaven".

The political source said up to 1,000 fighters had been involved. An Iraqi army source said they wore camouflage and appeared well organized.

The US military officially handed over responsibility for Najaf province to Iraqi security forces last month, withdrawing most US troops, to be recalled only to help in emergencies.

**ASHURA** Najaf governor Asaad Abu Gilel told Reuters the authorities had uncovered a plot to kill leading Shia clerics in Najaf on Monday, to coincide with the climax of Ashura, the annual Shia rite marking a 7th century battle which entrenched the schism between Shia and Sunni Islam.

"There is a conspiracy to kill the clergy on the 10th day of Muharram," he said, referring to Monday by the Muslim calendar.

Initially on Sunday the Najaf governor described the fighters as Sunnis, the majority in the Arab world and the once dominant minority in Iraq, where Shias have been in the ascendant since the US invasion of 2003.

The two sects are embroiled in conflict in Iraq that many fear is descending into all-out civil war.

But political and security sources said they were followers of Ahmed Hassani al-Yemeni and described him as an apocalyptic cult leader claiming to be the vanguard of the Mahdi -- a messiah-like figure in Islam whose coming

"This neighbourhood has become a ghost town in a state of war," said one resident, Jumaa al-Saqqa, a doctor in Gaza City's Shifa Hospital.

The rival groups are blaming each other for provoking the violence, which is only exacerbating the woes of Palestinians already suffering a crippling economic crisis because of a Western aid freeze.

Hamas's rise to power after a parliamentary election in January 2006 has pitted the Islamic Resistance Movement against the ousted Fatah party which clung to the presidency in a divided Palestinian government.

Palestinians are struggling to survive under a Western-led aid boycott against a defiant Hamas, which refuses international demands that it recognise Israel, renounce violence, and abide by past peace deals.

The duelling factions have tried for months to work out a power-sharing agreement to draw a line under the violence, but those talks have repeatedly collapsed.

## Polls must

**FROM PAGE 16** Former law minister Abdul Matin Khoshru said a flawless voter list is a must for a free, fair and credible election. If necessary, the government can call in the army to help prepare a credible voter list.

Only demolition of illegal structures and slums is not enough for the CG, and it should also catch those who plundered public money and launched a number of television channels in the last five years, he said.

Matin suggested amendment to clause 158 of the constitution for holding free and fair polls. He criticised the EC for wasting Tk 170 crore in the name of preparing a voter list.

"We must salute journalists as whatever democracy is now left in the country, it is because of strong reporting by them," he said.

Former lawmaker G M Kader demanded empowerment of the EC. There are enough election laws but those are not implemented, he said.

Brigadier (ret'd) Sakhawat Hossain opposed the idea of involving the army in the election process. If the army is to be involved, it should be given adequate power to execute its decisions. Otherwise, the army should not be deployed as guards of polling booths, he said.

Sakhawat however said the army can help in preparing voter identity cards.

He proposed holding elections on six days in the six divisions. The CG can also go for upazila and other local elections. This would reduce the expenditure for national elections, he said.

Former minister Sheikh Shahidul Islam said the present CG has been formed according to the doctrine of necessity. The nation expects much from it.

Excessive expenditure by candidates in the national elections cannot be stopped simply by laws, he said. If local governments are empowered and development activities are conducted by them, none would be interested to spend crores of taka in the election for the law making body, he thought.

Those who took part in the discussion included Barrister Harunur Rashid, actor Ilias Kanchon, Moslehuddin Ahmed, Q K Ahmed, Khondoker Ibrahim Khaled and former additional secretary Badre Alam.

heralds the start of perfect world justice. He had been operating from an office in Najaf until it was raided and closed down earlier this month.

The sources said captured gunmen declared loyalty to Yemeni.

Similar violent cults have been a feature of Islamic history. They have declared temporal Muslim leaders illegitimate infidels and have drawn followers from both Sunni and Shia believers, proclaiming a unity of inspiration from Mohammad.

Among other violent instances associated with proclamations of the coming of the Mahdi were opposition to British rule in Sudan in the 1880s and the siege of the Grand Mosque at Mecca in 1979, when hundreds of men occupied Islam's holiest site.

In today's Iraq, the powerful Mehdi Army militia of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr shares the name but not such ideas.

A US military spokesman said he could not confirm any details of who the gunmen were.

Up to 1.5 millions pilgrims gathered in Kerbala, 70 km (40 miles) north of Najaf, to mark Ashura – the death in battle of Mohammad's grandson in 680, which confirmed the split in Islam between rival claimants to the Prophet's inheritance.

In Kerbala, 11,000 troops and police were deployed. More than 100 people were killed there by suicide bombers three years ago, as Shias marked the first Ashura after the end of heavy restrictions imposed by Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated state.