

Hamas offers amnesty to Fatah leaders

Abbas tasks Fayyad with forming emergency govt

AP, AFP, Gaza City

On its first day of full rule in Gaza, the Islamic militant Hamas yesterday granted amnesty to Fatah leaders, signalling that it seeks conciliation with the defeated forces of moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Many had feared more bloodshed, particularly after victorious Hamas gunmen executed several Fatah fighters in the streets gangland-style on Thursday, in the final phase of the decisive five-day battle over Gaza.

Gazans awoke to the new reality of Hamas control Friday, fraught with uncertainty and fear that they'll become even poorer and more isolated. Gaza's crossings with Egypt and Israel, lifelines for the fenced-in territory, have been closed this week, and it was not

clear if they would reopen. Extended closure could quickly lead to a humanitarian crisis.

A Hamas spokesman said Palestinian police, now under Hamas command, would take up positions at the crossings, but it's unlikely Israel would acquiesce to such a deployment, after Hamas militants frequently attacked the passages in the past.

The Palestinian territories are in effect split in two. Gaza is now controlled by Hamas, which has close ties to Syria and Iran. The more populous West Bank, with about 2 million residents to Gaza's 1.4 million, is dominated by the more moderate Fatah, which has ties to Israel and the West.

Gaza's streets, deserted in the past week, were crowded with cars, pedestrians and triumphant Hamas fighters, some driving in jeeps and

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Syed Khokon coordinator of new party by Qureshi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Khokon yesterday revealed to The Daily Star that he left Awami League (AL) and took the responsibility of Dhaka City Coordinator in a new political party, which is yet to be named.

Khokon, son of AL leader and former Dhaka city corporation mayor late Mohammad Hanif, made the move five days after joint forces picked him up at his Banani residence. He, however, was released later on.

He said Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi leads the formation work of the new political party.

Khokon while talking to The Daily Star over telephone said in order to save the country from the divisions made by two political parties, he has joined the new political party. He also apologised to AL supporters and activists for leaving the party.

He said, "To get rid of the traditional [political] system, I have joined the new political party. A divided nation can never work for prosperity."

Khokon ruled out that the present army-backed caretaker government had mounted pressure on him to join a new party. "It is absolutely not true, they [joint forces] took me to enquire about a case," Khokon said.

Asked why he left AL, he said, "I was not feeling good about the environment in Awami League. It was unbearable... let's try for a change, there is nothing bad in trying."

Khokon was an AL candidate in the stalled ninth parliamentary elections.

About the death of his father, Khokon said, "He died due to politically motivated mental repression."

"Everyone knows he [Hanif] died due to injuries of the August 21 grenade attack," Khokon said, adding that he knows his father died due to political repression.

Ashiyani City owner held, remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dakhin Khan police arrested Ashiyani City owner Nazrul Islam, his two employees and a Rab informant on Thursday night in the city on charges of getting a man arrested with a planted firearm.

A Dhaka court yesterday remanded Nazrul Islam and three others for two days after police produced them before it with a prayer for seven days' remand for each in an arms case.

The three other arrestees are Nazrul's bodyguard Abdur Rahman, Ashiyani City administrative officer Abdul Hannan and the Rab informant Manik.

Sub-Inspector Ali Hossain, investigation officer (IO) of the case, said Rab members caught Mujibur

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Ashiyani City Director Nazrul Islam was produced before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka yesterday.

Iraq Sunni shrine bombed amid reprisal attacks

Five US soldiers slain

AFP, Basra/ Baghdad

Assailants pretending to be a film crew destroyed a Sunni shrine near the southern Iraqi city of Basra yesterday as militants carried out more revenge attacks for the bombing of a Shia shrine.

The US military, meanwhile, announced the deaths of five more soldiers taking its losses already this month to 36.

The shrine of Talha bin Obeidallah in the town of Zubair, west of overwhelmingly Shia Basra, was destroyed at dawn, an Iraqi army officer told AFP.

"A group of people carrying a camera arrived at the Talha bin Obeidallah shrine at 6:00 am (0200 GMT)," said Major General Ali Mussawi.

"They said they wanted to film the mosque. But they went about planting bombs around it."

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"The structure is completely destroyed," he said, adding that the shrine's security guards had been detained for questioning.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki condemned what he described as a terrorist act and ordered an indefinite curfew imposed on British-patrolled Basra from 4:00 pm (1200 GMT) to prevent any further tit-for-tat violence.

"The terrorist act which targeted the shrine came as part of a series of crimes aimed at inflaming sectarian passions among the sons of the country," the Shia premier said in a statement.

"Those who have committed it are enemies of Allah, the country and the people."

Several Sunni mosques have been attacked in tit-for-tat violence since Wednesday's bombing

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Bangla Bhai's motorbike driver held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Rapid Action Battalion arrested three people including the motorbike driver of executed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) kingpin Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai in two days.

On secret information, Rab men searched a Jamalpur-bound passenger bus at Khagdahar on Thursday night and arrested Imran Ali Manik, 25, a JMB activist, who worked as the motorbike driver of Bangla Bhai.

Books on jihad, a mobile set and a money bag were seized from his possession.

Hailing from Chandimondop village in Muktagacha upazila, Imran is accused in several cases including dacoity, police said.

Rab arrested an Indian national in front of Mymensingh Medical

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11 Sundarbans forest officials asked to give wealth report

UNB, Khulna

Eleven forest officials under the Sundarbans Division have been asked to submit their wealth statements to the Forest Ministry by June 20.

Conservator of Forest in Khulna M Mizanur Rahman Thursday received a fax message of the directive sent by the ministry.

The eleven forest officials are Conservator of Forest M Mizanur Rahman, DFO of Sundarbans Forest Division (West Zone) Mozaharul Islam, DFO of Sundarbans Forest Division (East Zone) SM Shahidullah, Assistant Conservator of Forest SM Shoib Khan, Mihir Kumar Dey, Sazzad Hossain, Abu Kalam, Mahmudul Hasan, Ruhul Amin, Belayet Hossain and Amir Hossain.

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2 die as boat capsizes in Meghna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Two people died and 12 others were injured when a boat capsized in the Meghna on Thursday night.

The dead were identified as Abdul Aziz, 34, and Rokan, 30, of Aganagar village of Bhairab upazila.

Police and locals said an overloaded boat from Chandpur Bazar of the upazila overturned and sank in the river near Bhairab Bazar railway bridge, leaving Aziz dead and 13 others injured.

Of the injured, Rokan died on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, while others are undergoing treatment at Bhairab Upazila Health Complex.

Aziz's body was found floating on the river in Gouripur area of the upazila yesterday morning.

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People wade in a flooded area of Halishahar in Chittagong as yesterday's downpour submerged many low-lying areas of the port city.

A roadmap for healthy politics govt's foremost concern

Says law adviser

UNB, Faridpur

Law Adviser Mainul Hosein yesterday said the caretaker government is busy formulating a roadmap for introducing healthy politics and establishing true democracy in the country.

"Election is no doubt one of our major concerns. But the foremost concern is to formulate a roadmap for introducing healthy politics and establishing true democracy in the country," he said in Faridpur at a reception for four lawyers of the local bar marking their 50 years of practice.

The law adviser said the country was deprived of correct politics and leadership "as a cartel of mafia" reigned over the country's politics in the bygone years.

"Now the time has come for the country's people to bring the culprits to the dock," he said, adding that such an opportunity should be utilised properly.

Mainul said the people have witnessed a number of general elections through which "democracy was virtually destroyed".

He said the present caretaker government sincerely wants to restore democracy to the mainstream.

Chaired by advocate Alhaj Munshi Mofazzal Hossain, the programme was also attended by Faridpur Deputy Commissioner Yahia Bhuiyan, Additional Police Superintendent Abu Hena and Faridpur Bar Association Secretary Liaqat Ali Khan.

Shariatpur ringleader Kalam held

UNB, Shariatpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel arrested an infamous criminal and former union parishad (UP) chairman at Natun Bazar in Gosharhat upazila of Shariatpur yesterday morning.

Rab sources said acting on secret information they arrested Kalam Kazi, 55, the leader of "Kalam Bahini" and former Nagerpara UP chairman.

Kalam was wanted in 10 cases, including cases filed in connection with murder and rape, police said.

He had established a reign of fear in the area since long and went into hiding soon after the present caretaker government took charge.

Prayer Timing		
June 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:05	4:40
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:50	6:55
Esha	8:15	8:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

US senators rescue immigration deal

AFP, Washington

Twelve million illegal immigrants in the United States gained new hope over their status when US lawmakers agreed to revive an overhaul of US immigration laws blocked by the Senate last week.

Senate Democrats and Republicans agreed Thursday to give the bill another chance after heavy lobbying on its behalf by President George W. Bush, who is bucking the sentiment of many in his Republican Party in hopes of adding successful immigration reform to his legacy as president.

That timeline would mean the bill would be unlikely to return to the Senate before the end of next week at the earliest.

The deal was reached after hours of intense talks between senators who framed the original "grand bargain" to grant a path to legal status to illegal immigrants, strengthen border enforcement and

initiate a low wage guest worker program.

The sweeping overhaul would also replace the current family-dominated immigration system with a merit-based points formula and attempt to cut a huge backlog for permanent resident green card applicants.

But last week conservatives blasting the bill as an "amnesty" for people who blatantly broke the law prevented it from proceeding to a final vote, handing Bush a setback in his hopes for a signature domestic achievement in his second term in the White House.

The breakthrough Thursday

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10 Pak troops killed in militant ambush

AFP, Quetta

Police made more than a dozen arrests yesterday after tribal militants shot dead 10 security personnel in southwest Pakistan, hours after a visit by a top US diplomat, officials said.

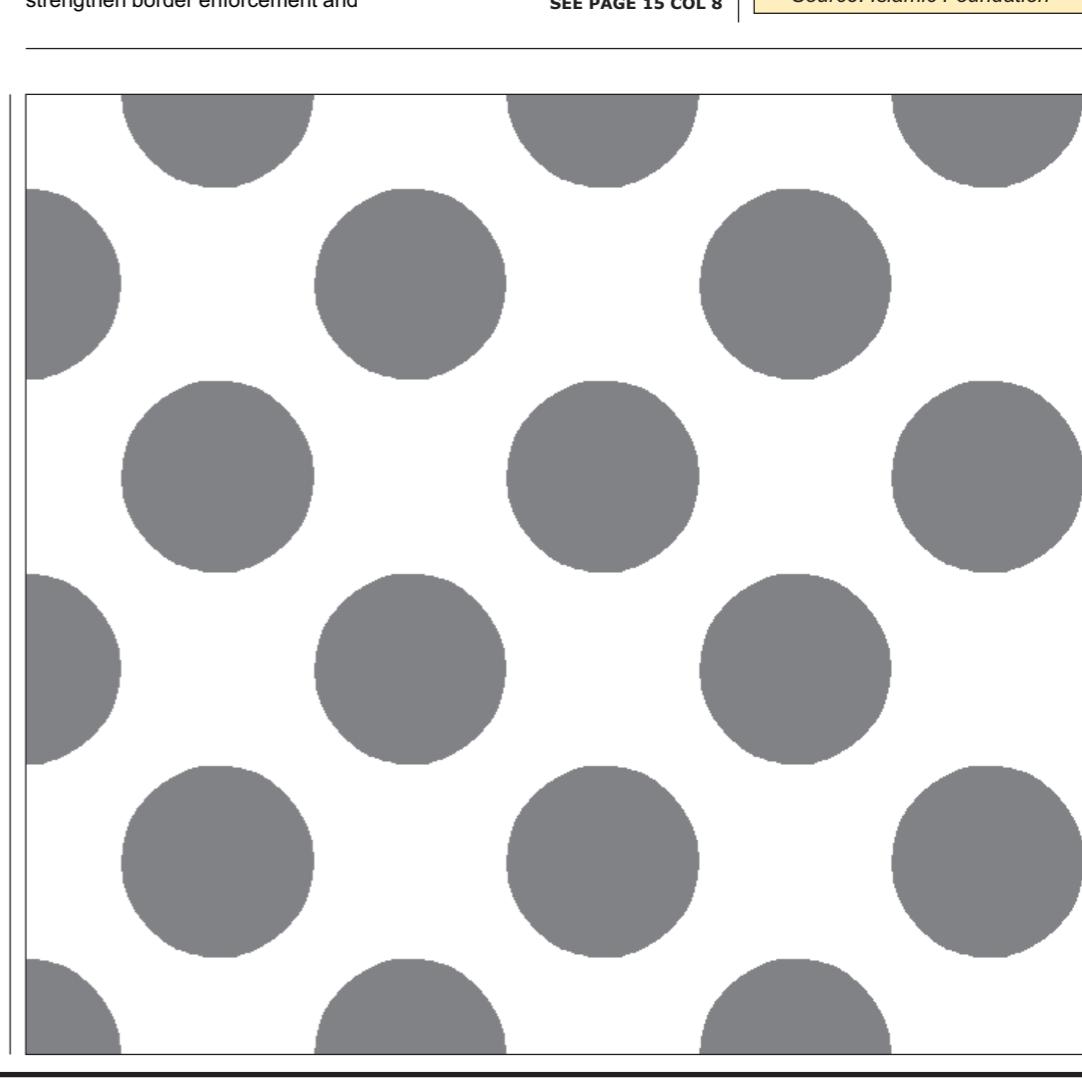
US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher stopped in Quetta, the capital of gas-rich Baluchistan province, on Thursday afternoon for talks on improving security along the border with Afghanistan.

The outlawed Baluchistan Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the ambush on Thursday night. The group wants more autonomy for ethnic Baluch people and a bigger share of the region's natural resources.

The attackers pumped bullets into the back of an open van carrying soldiers returning from home leave in other parts of the country, leaving bodies piled up in a blood-stained heap, an AFP photographer said.

Eight soldiers and one policeman were killed instantly and four people were wounded. One of the injured died in hospital overnight.

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Heavy rain at many places forecast

Ports hoist signal 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Strong monsoon wind and clouds pregnant with rain over the north Bay of Bengal on the first day of Bangla rainy season yesterday might cause heavy downpour in some parts of the country, the Met office said.

The Met office bulletin yesterday said monsoon is active and heavy rainfall may occur at many places in Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions. Besides, medium rainfall with gusty wind and lightning may occur at some places in Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions.

Teknaf, Kutubdia, Chittagong and Patuakhali experienced more than 40 millimetres of rainfall in 12 hours from 6:00am to 6:00pm yesterday. It rained in many other places of the country too.

The temperature may decrease today, the Met office bulletin said.

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