PHOTO: AFP

A handout picture released by the Israeli Government Press Office (GPO) shows Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert meeting with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas (R) in Jerusalem yesterday. Israeli and Palestinian leaders met Sunday to discuss control of the Gaza-Egypt border as residents of the Hamas-run territory freely crossed the breached frontier for a fifth day.

Abbas, Olmert meet to talk Gaza border breach

AFP, *Jerusalem*

Israeli and Palestinian leaders met yesterday to discuss control of the Gaza-Egypt border as residents of the Hamas-run territory freely crossed the breached frontier for a fifth day.

President Mahmud Abbas met Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem as part of their regular encounters in renewed peace talks, and was to ask Israel to allow his forces to control the border that Gaza militants blew open last week.

"During the talks, president Abbas is going to ask Olmert that the (Palestinian) Authority forces deploy on the frontier between Gaza and Egypt," senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told AFP.

Gaza's main border crossing with Egypt -- the only one that bypasses Israel -- has been open to unhindered passage of goods and people since Wednesday, when militants blew up several sections of the border barrier amid a punishing Israeli blockade. A senior Israeli official told AFP that for the moment Israel was not ruling out anything on restoring order.

"We will weigh positively anything that can help improve the situation," he said on condition of anonymity.

But another Israeli official said: "The idea of (Abbas's party) Fatah taking over security in the Gaza Strip sounds completely unrealistic at this time."

Hamas, the Islamist movement that has run Gaza since it routed Abbas loyalists in a week of deadly clashes last June, is likely to reject any deal that would exclude it or that would include international observers at the Rafah border crossing -- as was the case before it took over.

"Hamas wishes to confirm that it refuses to return to the (previous) agreement on the Rafah crossing," spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said in a statement.

"(Hamas) demands that it be an Egyptian-Palestinian crossing in accordance with new arrangements, either agreed to in three-way talks between Hamas, Fatah, and Cairo, or two-way talks with Cairo if president Mahmud Abbas continues to refuse dialogue with the Hamas movement," he added.

Abbas is due to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday after Cairo invited him and Hamas for separate talks about the border crisis.

In southern Gaza, Hamas armed forces had set up checkpoints in the divided town of Rafah, preventing Gaza cars from entering Egypt, an AFP correspondent said.

Pedestrians were still allowed to cross freely -- though there were less numbers than the previous days -- and cars from Egypt were also allowed to enter.

Egypt vowed on Sunday to take measures to regain control of the border, through which the United Nations has estimated that at least 700,000 Gazans -- nearly half the population of 1.5 million -- have crossed since last Wednesday, most of them to stock up on supplies.

Egyptian security forces tried in vain to seal the haemorrhaging border on Friday, and Cairo has hinted that it would like to restore control arrangements in place before Hamas seized control of Gaza.

Before the Hamas takeover the Rafah border crossing was run jointly by Egypt, Palestinian Authority forces and European Union observers, with surveillance cameras allowing Israel to monitor those passing through.

Merkel faces real test in German state elections

AFP, *Berlin*

Chancellor Angela Merkel faces her first genuine test at the ballot box since she came to power in 2005 when two German states elect new state parliaments yesterday.

More than 10 million voters were called to the polls in the prosperous western states of Hesse and Lower Saxony in divisive campaigns dominated by national issues.

Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) could lose control of Hesse, which would further strain the already fragile "grand coalition" at national level of her party and their traditional political rivals, the Social Democrats (SPD).

Bush delivers his final State of the Union address today

AFP, *Washington*

US President George W. Bush delivers his final State of the Union speech today, its agenda-setting powers diluted by pressing, unfinished business abroad and the fight to succeed him at home.

With not quite 12 months left in his term, the deeply unpopular president is slated to revive a few bold ideas -- like his May 2007 call to double US funding to battle AIDS -- and argue that US-led forces are winning in Iraq.

But he faces a US economy in crisis; the uncertain fate of his suddenly personal, late-game Middle East peace drive; a struggle over ending North Korea's nuclear programmes; and tensions with Iran over its atomic ambitions.

Iran advises UN 'restraint' over nuclear sanctions

AFP, *Davos*

Iran called Saturday on the UN Security Council to "exercise restraint" when reviewing a package of marginally tougher sanctions next week over Tehran's contested nuclear programme.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said Iran could "not understand" why the new measures were being proposed before the UN's nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, makes its report on Tehran's nuclear activities in March.

The package was agreed by foreign ministers of the five veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- plus Germany.

"We advise them to exercise restraint ... until the final report of the IAEA comes out," Mottaki told reporters on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

"The shared objective is the clarification of the ambiguities that have been insinuated by some parties and answering questions raised by the IAEA," he added.

Despite a four-year probe into Tehran's atomic drive, the IAEA has so far been unable to determine whether the programme is peaceful.

On January 13, the UN watchdog announced that Iran had agreed to clear up remaining questions on its nuclear programme -- including any military activity -- in four weeks.

Detained group planned attacks across Europe

AFP, *Madrid*

A group of alleged Islamist extremists, mostly from Pakistan, detained last weekend in Barcelona were planning a wave of suicide attacks across Europe, a Spanish newspaper reported Saturday citing a protected witness.

The group intended to carry out three attacks in Spain and one each in Portugal, France and Germany, the unnamed man who infiltrated the group told top-selling daily El Pais.

The report comes one day after Spanish judicial sources said that three of the six members of the group who allegedly planned to blow themselves up were still at large.

The preferred targets were public transportation networks, especially metro systems because of the difficulty which emergency services would have in reaching the injured there, he added, according to the newspaper.

Egypt tries to contain chaotic border

AP, *Rafah*

Egyptian forces moved to close the breached border with the Gaza Strip by stopping vehicle traffic Sunday and tightening a security cordon around Rafah in an effort to confine Palestinians crossing freely into Egypt for the fifth day in a row.

Regional leaders, meanwhile, scrambled to find a solution to the breach.

One of the gaps carved into the border wall was blocked with piles of sand and border police carrying electric cattle prods stopped cars with Palestinian plates from entering Egypt at other openings as well as Egyptians cars from crossing into Gaza. Pedestrians, however, freely moved back and forth.

"Egypt will take necessary actions and measures to control the border in Gaza soon," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, following a meeting in Cairo with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

Huge black support may backfire for Obama

AP, *Columbia*

Black voters' huge support for Barack Obama in South Carolina's Democratic presidential primary could be a double-edged sword as he strives to widen support for his White House hopes.

Obama, campaigning strongly to become the United States' first black president, drew a landslide of votes among African-American electors in the former slave-owning state, with more than 80 percent of support, according to exit polls broadcast by CNN news.

Preliminary exit polls cited by ABC news said more than half the voters that turned out were black.

"The demographics of who votes in the Democratic primary in South Carolina are pretty obvious," said Bruce Ransom, a Clemson University political science professor and expert on South Carolina's black electorate.

"The larger issue is whether Obama is tagged as just the black candidate, as opposed to his efforts to be more universal and broad-based."

The Illinois senator has taken pains to stress his appeal across all races.

"If you look at this campaign, we won in Iowa, that's 94 percent white, we are practically tied in New Hampshire with the same racials," Obama said on MSNBC on Saturday.

"We won in some of the diverse states and some of the least-diverse states."

Saturday's victory, which breathed fresh life into Obama's campaign after wins in key states by Hillary Clinton, came after campaigning in recent weeks was marked by rows over race and the country's sensitive civil rights history.

His camp has accused the Hillary Clinton campaign of playing up race as an issue in the hunt for the Democratic nomination in order to marginalise her rival, charges which the former first lady's camp rejects.

"There is some thinking about whether or not the Hillary Clinton campaign has used this as a strategy," Ransom said.

He cited a theory that "the statements made a couple of weeks ago were designed to have blacks rally around Obama so they (Clinton's campaign) could then make the charge that he could win South Carolina, but on the black vote alone, and isolate him."

Neal Thigpen, political science professor at Francis Marion University, also said the Hillary Clinton campaign had used racial issues strategically to make Obama's support appear too narrowly based on the black vote.

"They adopted this strategy, 'Sure he's going to win there, but let's demonstrate that the only people who are going to vote for him are the black voters'," he told AFP.

A Wall Street Journal/NBC poll last week reflected Obama's lead among black voters nationwide, but also had some troubling signs for Obama.

It showed Hillary Clinton leading the Democratic race nationally among white Americans 53 percent to 24 percent for Obama, up from a 40-23 percent margin last month.

PHOTO: AFP

US Democratic presidential hopeful, Illinois Senator Barack Obama and his wife Michelle celebrate victory in the South Carolina's primary at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Centre on Saturday in Columbia, South Carolina.

Florida governor endorses McCain

AP, *St. Petersburg*

Florida Gov Charlie Crist endorsed a beaming Sen John McCain on Saturday night, delivering a boost three days before the state's pivotal primary.

Crist praised McCain as a "true American hero." At a county GOP dinner in St. Petersburg, Crist added, "After thinking about it as much as I have, I don't think anybody would do better than the man who stands next to me, Sen John McCain."

It was the second high-profile endorsement in as many days for McCain, who is locked in a tight primary race with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. Crist stepped to the podium a little more than 24 hours after Sen Mel Martinez announced he was backing his colleague in the Senate. Officials said Martinez, who campaigned Saturday with McCain, had prodded the governor to follow his lead.

ব্যাংকার্স রিক্রুটমেন্ট কমিটি (বিআরসি)

প্রযত্নেঃ হিউম্যান রিসোর্সেস ডিপার্টমেন্ট
বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক
প্রধান কার্যালয়
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বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর ঃ ০৩/২০০৮ তারিখঃ ১৭/০১/২০০৮ইং

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ব্যাংকার্স রিক্রুটমেন্ট কমিটির তত্ত্বাবধানে বাংলাদেশ শিল্প ঋণ সংস্থা ও কর্মসংস্থান ব্যাংকে নিম্নোক্ত পদগুলোতে নিয়োগের নিমিত্তে প্যানেল প্রস্তুতির জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাধীনে বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ

ক্রঃ নং	সংস্থা/ ব্যাংকের নাম	পদের নাম	পদের সংখ্যা	বেতন স্কেল (জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল, ২০০৫ অনুযায়ী)	২৫/০২/০৮ তারিখে বয়স	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
১.	বাংলাদেশ শিল্প ঋণ সংস্থা	অফিসার-১ম শ্রেণী (ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ার)	০১	৮৬,৮০০-৮১৩,০৯০/-	ক) অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর, খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের ক্ষেত্রে অনূর্ধ্ব ৩২ বছর।	কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে কমপক্ষে দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর ব্যাচেলর অব ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ডিগ্রি এবং অন্যান্য একাডেমিক পরীক্ষাসমূহের যে কোন একটিতে প্রথম বিভাগ/শ্রেণী থাকতে হবে।
২.	কর্মসংস্থান ব্যাংক	সহকারী প্রোগ্রামার	০১	৮৬,৮০০-৮১৩,০৯০/-	ক) অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর, খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের ক্ষেত্রে অনূর্ধ্ব ৩২ বছর।	(ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে প্রথম শ্রেণীর স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রি অথবা দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর সম্মানসহ দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রি; (খ) প্রার্থীকে প্রোগ্রামিং এর Standard Aptitude Test এ উত্তীর্ণ হতে হবে; (গ) কোন স্বীকৃত পেশাদার (Professional) কম্পিউটার সোসাইটির সহযোগী সদস্য হতে হবে।
		সিনিয়র অফিসার	৩৪	৮৬,৮০০-৮১৩,০৯০/-	ক) অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর, খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের ক্ষেত্রে অনূর্ধ্ব ৩২ বছর।	কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে প্রথম শ্রেণীর স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রি অথবা দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর সম্মানসহ দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রি।
		অফিসার	৫৭	৮৫,১০০-৮১০,৩৬০/-	ক) অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর, খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/ শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের ক্ষেত্রে অনূর্ধ্ব ৩২ বছর।	কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে অন্যূন দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রি; তবে শিক্ষা জীবনে কোন পরীক্ষায় তৃতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

২) আগ্রহী প্রার্থীদেরকে নিম্নবর্ণিত জীবন-বৃত্তান্ত (ইংরেজিতে), সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা (যদি থাকে) সনদপত্র এবং মার্কশীট/ট্রান্সক্রিপ্ট এর সত্যায়িত কপি, সম্প্রতি তোলা ০৪ (চার) কপি পাসপোর্ট আকারের সত্যায়িত ছবি, স্ব-স্ব স্থায়ী ঠিকানার সমর্থনে ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ চেয়ারম্যান/পৌরসভার চেয়ারম্যান/ওয়ার্ড কমিশনার কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত জাতীয়তা সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি (বিবাহিতা মহিলা প্রার্থীকে স্বামীর স্থায়ী ঠিকানার অনুকূলে ইস্যুকৃত জাতীয়তা সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি দাখিল করতে হবে) এবং সদস্য-সচিব, বিআরসি এর অনুকূলে ইস্যুকৃত টাঃ ১৫০/- (একশত পঞ্চাশ মাত্র) মূল্যমানের অফেরতযোগ্য ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার (পোস্টাল অর্ডার গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়) সহ দরখাস্ত শুধুমাত্র ডাকযোগে সদস্য-সচিব, ব্যাংকার্স রিক্রুটমেন্ট কমিটি, প্রযত্নে-হিউম্যান রিসোর্সেস ডিপার্টমেন্ট, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ঢাকা এই ঠিকানায় আগামী ২৫/০২/২০০৮ তারিখের মধ্যে পৌছাতে হবে।

(A) Name (In Block Letter)
(B) i) Father's/Husband's Name
ii) Mother's Name
(C) Present Address
(D) Permanent Address
(For Married Women Husband's Permanent Address)
(E) Nationality
(F) Date of Birth
(G) Age as on 25/02/2008
(H) Educational Qualification

Name of Exam.	Division/Class/Grade	Board/University	Year of Passing

(I) Experience (if any)
(J) Whether Son/Daughter of Freedom Fighter/Martyred Freedom Fighter (Write Yes/No)
(K) Whether Tribal (Write Yes/No)
(L) Bank Draft/Pay Order No. (Date & Name of the issuing Bank Branch)
(M) Signature of the Applicant (with date)

৩) বিদেশী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে প্রাপ্ত ডিগ্রির ক্ষেত্রে দেশি সংশ্লিষ্ট বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়/বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন হতে ইস্যুকৃত সমমান সার্টিফিকেট (Equivalence Certificate) অবশ্যই দরখাস্তের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৪) প্রার্থীদের লিখিত ও মৌলিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে হবে।
৫) কোটা সংক্রান্ত সরকারি নীতিমালা অনুসরণ করা হবে।
৬) ক) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার পুত্র/কন্যা হিসেবে প্রার্থীকে আবেদনপত্রের সাথে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা পিতা/মাতার মুক্তিযোদ্ধা সার্টিফিকেট (গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব এবং মাননীয় মন্ত্রী/প্রতিমন্ত্রী কর্তৃক স্বাক্ষরিত ও প্রতিস্বাক্ষরিত হতে হবে) এর সত্যায়িত কপি দাখিল করতে হবে। মহিলা মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের ক্ষেত্রে আবেদনকারীকে এ বিষয়ে ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ/পৌরসভার চেয়ারম্যান/ওয়ার্ড কমিশনার কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সার্টিফিকেটের সত্যায়িত কপি আবেদনপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
খ) উপজাতি প্রার্থীদেরকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি আবেদনপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৭) চাকুরীরত প্রার্থীদেরকে তাদের স্ব-স্ব নিয়োগ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে দরখাস্ত প্রেরণ করতে হবে।
৮) অসম্পূর্ণ/ভুল তথ্য সম্বলিত দরখাস্ত কোনো প্রকার যোগাযোগ ব্যতিরেকেই বাতিল করা হবে।
৯) দরখাস্ত এবং খামের উপরে সংস্থা/ব্যাংকের নাম ও পদের নাম অবশ্যই স্পষ্টভাবে উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

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Recruitment of 'Probationary Officer'

Standard Bank Limited a third generation progressive Private Commercial Bank with steady growth in it's business expansion program desires to recruit 5th batch of PROBATIONARY OFFICERS to strengthen the team with potential candidates who are challenge striving, forward looking, proactive, self-motivated with positive attitude and pleasing personality and possessing consistent high grade academic track record.

Candidates from Bangladeshi citizen with MBA/ MBM/ Masters in Accounting/ Management/ Banking/ Finance/ Marketing/ Economics/ Political Science/ Sociology/ Physics/ Mathematics/ English/ History/ Statistics/ Psychology/ Public Admin./ International Relations/ Agriculture having minimum 2 (Two) "First Division", no "Third Division", during their entire academic courses with age bar of 30 years (maximum) as on 31.12.2007 may apply with confidence furnishing their detailed "Resume", with two copies of recent passport size photograph, authenticated copies of all academic certificates along-with Draft/ Pay-Order for Tk. 300/- (Taka Three Hundred) only (non-refundable) in favor of Standard Bank Limited, addressed to the **Managing Director, Standard Bank Limited, Head Office, Metropolitan Chamber Building (3rd Floor), 122-124, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 to reach latest by 10th February, 2008.**

Candidates possessing requisite qualification shall have to sit for written test and only short listed candidates will be called for interview as per merit list of the written test to complete the selection process.

Selected candidates will be appointed on Probation for a period of 1 (One) year with a monthly consolidated pay of Tk. 18,000/- (Taka Eighteen Thousand) only. On successful completion of Probation period they will be absorbed as 'Officer' under the regular pay packages as admissible in the grade. Any kind of persuasion shall be treated as disqualification of the candidate.