

# Laws of war violated by Israel in Gaza

Says rights groups

AP, Gaza City

Human rights groups are seeking to build a case that Israel and Hamas violated the laws of war during the fighting last month in this tiny coastal territory a charge both combatants reject.

On Tuesday, the International Criminal Court said the Palestinian Authority had recognised the court's jurisdiction in a move aimed at allowing a war crimes investigation.

Given the clarity of Hamas' violations, such as firing rockets at Israeli cities, organisations are focusing more on Israeli actions, the facts of which they say are harder to establish.

"The Israeli authorities deny every-

thing, so one has to prove what happened in a way that you don't need to do with the Palestinian rockets," said Donatella Rovera of Amnesty International.

Among the questions being raised are whether Israel used disproportionate force and failed to protect civilians.

In one case, Israeli artillery fire hit near a UN school where hundreds of Gazans had sought refuge, killing 42 people, Israeli said its troops were responding to fire from militants near the school.

In another instance, Gazans allege Israeli soldiers ordered 110 civilians into a warehouse, then shelled it the next day, killing 30. Israel denies the army targeted the warehouse, saying the building was

hit during intense combat with militants in that area.

"The suspected war crimes make for a very long list," said Jessica Montell, head of the Israeli group B'Tselem.

Speaking to lawmakers at the European Parliament on Wednesday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas added his voice to those accusing Israel of violations and calling for those responsible to be held to account.

"There are crimes and people who committed those crimes have to be held responsible so that these crimes cannot be repeated," he said. "We are stretching out our hand for peace with Israel, but what was done is regrettably crimes of war."



PHOTO: AFP

Indian Minister of External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee (2L) presents the Sustainable Development Leadership Award to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (L) as former president of Maldives Abdul Gayoom (2R) and The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) Director General RKPachauri look on during the inauguration of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) 2009 in New Delhi yesterday.

## Suicide attack in Iraqi restaurant kills 12

AFP, Baquba

At least 12 people were killed in a suicide attack on a restaurant in the Iraqi province of Diyala, northeast of Baghdad, on Thursday, local officials told AFP.

The attacker struck in Khanaqin, a mainly Kurdish town near the Iranian border.

"Twelve people were killed and about 11 wounded in the suicide attack against the restaurant," an official based at security force headquarters in the province of Diyala, told AFP, updating an earlier police toll.

Yahya Ibrahim, a 35-year-old mechanic, was among those injured.



PHOTO: AFP

A man displays cash he received from Bailout Bill at the "Bailout Booth" on Times Square in New York on Wednesday.

## Mystery man gives away cash in New York

AFP, New York

He won't say his name, hides his face, and hands cash to anyone who asks in the middle of New York.

The mystery benefactor known only as Bailout Bill sat Wednesday behind a counter in the heart of Times Square giving money to hundreds of people waiting in temperatures well below freezing.

The well-built man protected by plainclothes guards wore wraparound black glasses and a wool hat pulled low over his head.

## Dhaka to renew goods transport

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more than 60 countries. Both the BIPA and bilateral trade agreement are expected to be signed between Bangladesh Commerce Minister Mohammad Faruk Khan and Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee during the latter's visit to Dhaka on Monday, commerce ministry officials said.

"We will sign more similar treaties that will bring welfare and development for the country and its people," Sheikh Hasina was quoted as saying by her Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad.

Held at the Cabinet Division of the Secretariat, the meeting kept the articles and clauses of the bilateral trade agreement as it were in the past.

The agreement was first signed during late president Ziaur Rahman's rule on October 4, 1980, and was last renewed on March 21, 2006 between former finance minister M Saifur Rahman and India commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath in New Delhi. The treaty is renewed every three years.

Article 8 of the treaty reads, "The two governments agree to make mutually beneficial arrangements for the use of their waterways, roadways and railways for commerce between the two countries for passage of goods between two places in one country through the territory of the other."

However, there has been little headway in terms of implementing the agreement and the reason behind the failure of successive governments in nearly three decades is the issue of transit included in the agreement, which ultimately became a political issue.

Highly placed sources in the government said the present government is committed to executing the treaty this time.

If the treaty is implemented, not only India would be benefited in transporting goods to its north-eastern states but Bangladesh will also have huge economic

boost by using the territory of India to reach Nepal and Bhutan.

Scope of trade and commerce between Bangladesh and India would expand and barriers to export to India would be removed with the renewal of the agreement and signing of BIPA, the sources said.

According to the proposed BIPA, it requires both the countries to encourage and create favourable conditions for investors of each other to make investments in their territory and to admit investments in accordance with their laws.

Investments from either country in the territory of the other have to be given a treatment that is not less favourable than what the country provides investments of its own investors or investors from any other country with.

"We will be able to increase the volume of our exports by exporting more goods to India under this treaty," Commerce Minister Faruk Khan told The Daily Star.

Asked about transit, he said, "We are not signing any treaty on transit. It is an India-Bangladesh trade agreement. A treaty regarding transit might be signed in the future for further expansion of business, if required."

Foreign Secretary Mohammad Touhid Hossain also told reporters that Bangladesh is not signing any transit deal during Pranab Mukherjee's visit. "This is basically a goodwill trip," he said.

A number of issues in the interest of Bangladesh, including duty- and quota-free access of Bangladeshi goods to India, removal of tariff barriers, maritime boundary and border demarcation and sharing of water of common rivers, will come up in the bilateral talks with Pranab.

Infrastructure development for smooth functioning of land ports and measures to reduce trade imbalance are likely to figure prominently in the talks between Pranab and Hasina, said government sources.

"Security is also an issue to be discussed

during Pranab Mukherjee's visit because security is a common concern for both the countries," said the foreign secretary.

BNP REACTION

Reiterating its call for the government not to strike any deal without proper discussions, BNP yesterday said people will not accept any treaty against national interests.

"Discussions are a must before signing any deals on transit. The government must know what will protect the country's interests and what won't," said BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

He was speaking at a meeting organised by Jatityabadi Jubo Dal, the party's youth wing.

In an oblique reference to India, he said, "It won't be acceptable to people if you [government] give everything for free to those who have brought you to power."

Delwar came down hard on the government for withdrawal of the Special Security Force measures for BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia, and asked the authorities to ensure her security.

The meeting was addressed among others by opposition chief whip Joyal Abedin Faruq, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Barkatullah Bulu, Moazzem Hossain Alal and Khairul Kabir Khokon.

Meanwhile, BNP's Vice-president MK Anwar last night told The Daily Star that Bangladesh had signed many treaties with India in the past, but most of them were not implemented due to the non-cooperation from the other side.

About the treaty signed during the BNP government, he said it was not implemented as both sides differed on different conditions.

Asked about transit, he said, "We have no objection to Indian goods being transported by Bangladeshi vehicles, but we won't accept if Indian vehicles are allowed to use our territory to carry goods from the country's [India] one part to another."

## Name-only newspapers

FROM PAGE 1

published from Dhaka. Most of those newspapers exist only in names but devoured major portion of the allocation, thanks to the 'generosity' of the information ministry and its crooked officials.

These dishonest officials opened the floodgates of opportunity for name-only newspapers depriving mainstream national dailies.

There is also widespread allegation against the information ministry officials that they indulged in such malpractices under the table.

Apart from this, the then government also spent around TK. 5 crore to publish its advertisements and supplementary in 243 newspapers published from outside of Dhaka.

Some weekly, fortnightly and monthly magazines both from Dhaka and different parts of the country also received quite a good segment of the allocation.

In replying to a lawmaker's query, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad placed the list before the House showing categorically which newspaper got how much.

The information minister, however, claimed the adver-

tisements were given to the newspapers as per the advertisement rules of 1987.

The list shows that daily Inquilab got the highest amount of allocated money of TK 7.87 crore, BNP's mouthpiece Dinkal TK 6.64 crore, mouthpiece of Jamaat-e-Islami Sangram TK 5.29 crore, Ittefaq TK 5.87 crore, Jugantar TK 4.21 crore, Manabjaman TK 4.67 crore, Prothom Alo TK 2.31 crore, Ajker Kagoj TK 2.36 crore, Sangbad TK 2.09 crore, Khabarpatra, owned by Hafiz Ibrahim, elder brother of controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun, TK 2.05 crore, and Bhorer Kagoj TK 2.16 crore.

Among the English dailies The News Today received the highest allocation of TK 2.34 crore, The Independent TK 2.28 crore, The Daily Star TK 1.58 crore, The New Age TK 1.10 crore, The Bangladesh Today TK 1.00 crore, The Financial Express TK 1.27 crore, and The New Nation TK 1.65 crore.

Of the name-only Bengali dailies Matubhumi received TK 1.11 crore, Desh Janata TK 1.09 crore, Samachar TK 1.44 crore, Ajker Prottsaha TK 1.09 crore, Banner TK 39.19 lakh, Shakti TK 63.84 lakh, Amal TK 44.72 lakh,

Jalchhap TK 35.37 lakh, Biral TK 26.54 lakh, Prithibir Alo TK 19.30 lakh, Natun Alo TK 34.27 lakh, Chobish Ghonta TK 28.42 lakh, Shuvadin TK 26.09 lakh, Kishan TK 42.04 lakh, Desher Chithi TK 13.23 lakh, Manobik Barta TK 19.68 lakh, Crime News TK 16.54 lakh, Ojana TK 4.55 lakh, and Fasal TK 30.91 lakh.

Among the name-only English dailies Good Morning got TK 60.47 lakh, Capital News TK 53.14 lakh, The Daily News Line TK 21.89 lakh, The Evening News TK 7.70 lakh, The Capital Views TK 24.35 lakh and The Muslim Times TK 1.45 lakh.

Among the local newspapers Jessore-based Lok Samaj, owned by former minister Tariqul Islam, got the highest amount of money of TK 67.99 lakh, Chittagong-based Karnofuli, loyal to Jamaat-e-Islami, TK 55.17 lakh.

In replying to the lawmakers' queries, the information minister said the current government believes in free flow of information.

"All newspapers and satellite television channels are working independently," the information minister said adding, the government does not believe in butting into the affairs of the news media.

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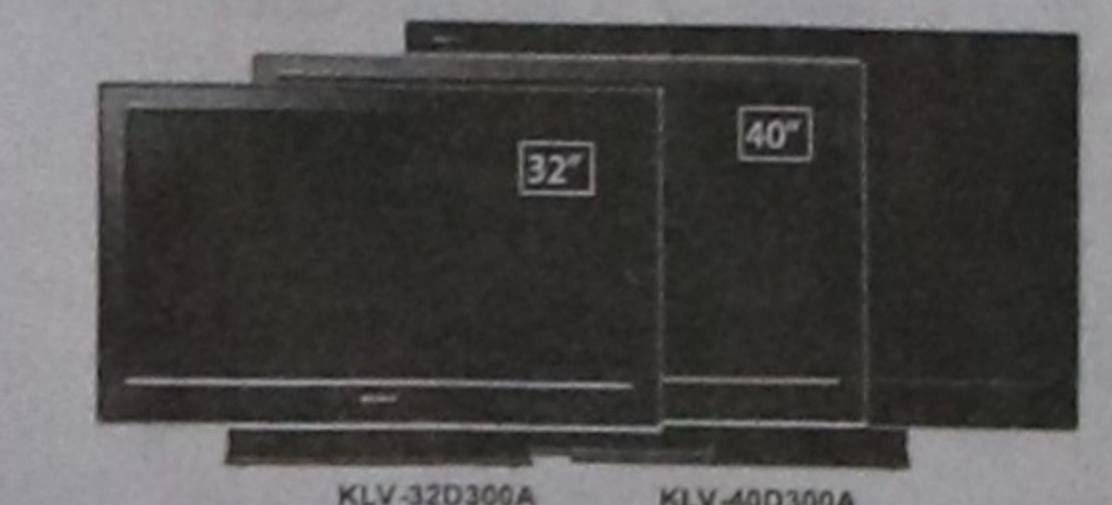
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