

Israel's crackdown on Hamas: 12 leaders detained

AFP, Ramallah

Israel launched a new crackdown on Hamas yesterday, rounding up top leaders in the West Bank after the failure of efforts to secure the release of a soldier held by the Islamist rulers of the Gaza Strip.

Security forces seized 12 senior Hamas leaders in pre-dawn raids in the occupied West Bank, including four members of the Palestinian legislative council, Hamas and the army said.

The Islamists denounced the action as "blackmail" following the collapse of Egyptian-brokered efforts to reach an agreement on an Israel-Hamas prisoner swap.

The Palestinian Authority, headed by Hamas's political foe Fatah, also slammed the arrests and called on the international community to intervene.

"These men have been the leaders of the ongoing effort to restore the administrative branch of the Hamas terror organisation in the region, while attempting to strengthen the power and influence of Hamas," an Israeli military spokeswoman said.

Thirty-six Hamas MPs have been in jail since a major crackdown in the West Bank that followed the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit by Gaza militants including Hamas fighters in a deadly cross-border raid in June 2006.

On Saturday, Shalit will have been held captive for 1,000 days.

Among those arrested were Nasseer al-Shaer, who was deputy premier in the short-lived Hamas government formed in March 2006, and two senior Hamas officials in the West Bank, Raafat Nassif and Adnan Asfur, the group said.

Western-backed Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad condemned the arrests and called on the international community to intervene "to pressure Israel to immediately free all members of Palestinian parliament whom they are holding."

A spokesman for president Mahmud Abbas, whose forces were booted out of Gaza by Hamas in June 2007 after deadly factional fighting, blasted the arrests as "kidnappings" aimed at torpedoing reconciliation talks under way between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo.

Free judiciary

FROM PAGE 1
The country's constitution, passed and enforced in 1972, says the state will ensure separation of the judiciary from the executive. But successive governments avoided fulfilling the obligation.

Finally in 2007, the caretaker government promulgated two ordinances amending the CrPC and separated the judiciary in line with the Supreme Court directives.

But the twin ordinances ceased to have effect on February 25, as those were not ratified in parliament in time.

Later, Law Minister Shafige Ahmed placed a bill to enact law necessary to keep the judiciary separate.

Legal experts likened the standing committee's proposal to undermining the spirit of the historic Supreme Court verdict on judiciary separation.

However, they said, the government is doing it all quite tactfully. Instead of vesting the cognisance authority directly in the executive magistrates, it is keeping the matter at its discretion.

Challenging the move legally might prove difficult until there is an instance of the government exercising the power, they added.

In the report, committee Chairman Suranjit Sengupta said, "For some limitations, it was not possible to give the executive division magisterial authority directly."

He however claimed the committee tried to ensure that power is evenly shared between the judiciary and the executive.

He said he believes the two will complement each other and help establish a 'people judiciary' once the bill is passed.

"It is unfortunate but true that access to justice often goes beyond people's financial capability," Suranjit observed.

The report details the efforts since 1957 to separate the judiciary from the executive.

Awami League in 1957 passed a law amending the CrPC for separation of the judiciary with a provision to enforce the law by notification.

"But as the notification was not issued, the judiciary was not separated," Suranjit said.

The report said separation of the judiciary is a political pledge first included in Juktafront's 21-point charter of demands in 1954. Later, it figured in the historic six- and 11-point demand.

In the national assembly on February 6, 1956, the report continues, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, "Judiciary shall be separated from the administration to ensure justice for people".

BTCL staff

FROM PAGE 1
The directors are: Nur Hossain Miah, Abul Kashem Miah, Kazi Abbasuddin, Gulshan Ara and Kazi Manjurul Karim.

The senior accountants are: Sheikh Ali Ahmmad, Idris Ali, Moniruzzaman Choudhury, ABM Fazlul Haque, Dewan Mohammad Akhteruzzaman, Abdul Mannan Talukder, Zahidur Rahman, Abdul Latif Howlader, Shahjahan Miah, Masud Hasan, and Ayub Reza.

The assistant directors are: Henayet Uddin, Abdul Majid Miah, Sayed Shakawat Hossain Chowdhury, Mohiuddin, Shawkat Ali Miah, Nurul Islam Chowdhury and ATM Khaliuzzaman.

The cases were filed with different police stations across the country.

Addicts

FROM PAGE 16
They said some of them might be even HIV positive. The addicts are advised not to share needles and maintain cleanliness.

Locals, however, expressed dissatisfaction over the movement of drug addicts in their neighbourhood.

Attack threat

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