

# Palestinian-Israeli prisoner swap in early stages

AFP, Cairo

Hamas supremo Khaled Meshal confirmed yesterday that Germany is mediating an Israeli-Palestinian prisoner swap that would include Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit but stressed the bid is in its early stages.

Concerning Shalit, as you know there is some development as a result of the German mediation bid in coordination with Egypt," Meshal told a joint news conference in Cairo with Arab League chief Amr Mussa.

"But we are in the early stages. We have not discussed any (Palestinian) names nor any details," said the exiled leader of the Islamist Hamas movement, which controls the Gaza Strip, during a visit to Egypt.

"More time is needed" before any real progress can be announced, Meshal said. "We must be cautious and not hasty."

The German weekly *Der Spiegel* reported in last Monday's edition that Israel had accepted a German-mediated prisoner swap deal to free hundreds of Palestinians in return for Shalit.

The German secret services have recently been holding talks with the Israeli government and Hamas. The aim is to obtain the exchange of Gilad Shalit against several hundred Palestinian prisoners, *Der Spiegel* said.

The same day Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum confirmed the report but said there had been "no progress" on the ground.

Meshal discussed the swap on Saturday with Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, who has unsuccessfully brokered indirect talks between Israel and Hamas on the issue, and is Cairo's point man on efforts to reconcile rival Palestinian factions.

The topic of the prisoners was one of the main subjects raised during the session, an Egyptian official was quoted as saying by the state-run news agency MENA.

"Finding a solution to this topic will have a major impact on the other questions, such as lifting the blockade and the permanent opening of the crossing points" with the Gaza Strip, he said.

Shalit, who also holds French citizenship, was seized in June 2006 in a deadly cross-border raid from the Gaza Strip conducted by three Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas, which now rules the coastal territory.

His parents received a letter from French President Nicolas Sarkozy on August 28 - the day Shalit turned 23 - pledging that France "will continue to act tirelessly... in order that he be released."

## Facts & Tips

FROM PAGE 1

Ruhul Haque. It is best not to report to a hospital since you could spread the disease. Patients of cancer, diabetes, obese, heart disease, asthma, pregnant women, and children should be more careful if they have developed these symptoms. They can visit a doctor.

### LAB TEST

The health ministry stopped conducting laboratory test, which is only available at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) at Mohakhali.

### REDUCE THE RISK OF CATCHING OR SPREADING FLU

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Use tissues.

Dispose of used tissues carefully.

Clean hard surfaces (eg kitchen worktops, door handles) frequently with antiseptic cleaner.

### HOSPITALS

### PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE FLU IN DHAKA

Dhaka Medical College

## Obama's adviser for green jobs resigns

AFP, Washington

Meshal, in Cairo since Friday at the head of a large delegation, also discussed with Suleiman efforts to end a protracted rift between Hamas and the secular Fatah party of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

The talks focused on "how to end... Palestinian divisions as quickly as possible, ahead of the political process likely to be launched following the announcement by the United States in a few weeks' time of their vision for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," the Egyptian official said.

The Palestinian reconciliation project remains stalled on three areas of disagreement, the official told MENA, without naming them.

Hamas and Fatah have been in dispute since a split culminated in the Islamists violently seizing control of Gaza in June 2007 after 18 months of shaky coalition government.

Cairo wants the dialogue to resume after Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival marking the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which this year will be on September 21 or 22.

Abbas said on Saturday after meeting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Cairo is reviewing the positions of each Palestinian faction before making proposals "within the next week" and setting a date for a final round of talks.

Egypt has twice postponed the date scheduled for signing a Palestinian unity agreement because of continued disagreements between the rivals.

## Yunus

FROM PAGE 1

Responding to a question regarding news in a local daily that Prof Yunus will work for BNP, he said that it is totally baseless, a travesty of truth.

"I am surprised after seeing the news that I will work for BNP. I strongly protest such news and condemn such journalism that went against the truth," he said.

On August 30, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia congratulated Prof Yunus on his receiving Presidential Medal of Freedom Award, the highest civilian honour of the USA.

A five-member delegation led by BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan handed over Khaleda's letter of felicitation to Yunus at his Gramen Bank office.

Yunus thanked Khaleda for her gesture and said, "We have dreams and the ability to materialise those dreams as well, but we want the opportunity to express the ability."

US President Barack Obama conferred the award on Prof Yunus at the White House on August 12.

## Sale of drug

FROM PAGE 1

Hossain after a meeting with the pharmaceutical companies at the health ministry yesterday.

He said under the direct supervision of the Drug Administration, civil surgeons and upazila nirbahi officers, the pharmacies would be selected for selling the drug.

Three pharmacies will get permission in upazila level to sell the drug and five pharmacies in district level while 50 pharmacies in Dhaka City Corporation and 10 in other metropolitan cities each.

"Currently sixteen districts have been affected by the swine flu that may spread more during the upcoming Eid as a large number of people will go to their village home leaving Dhaka. Therefore, the decision has been taken to make the drug available in the country," he said.

Asked about the availability of the antiviral drug of Popular Pharma at local pharmacies, Monir Hossain said a circular was issued in 2007 addressing five pharmaceutical companies that the drug could not be sold in local markets.

"But as Popular Pharma got registration in April 2008, and its name was not mentioned in that circular and so it is marketing this drug," said the DG adding that the government would amend the circular saying that the drug could be sold under the 'controlled market' with the prescription of registered medical practitioners.

He warned that stern action would be taken against those who would breach the government's order.

Actually a very few people would need the antiviral drug as 90-95 percent swine flu infected people get well without receiving the drug but he said the drug is needed only for patients who are in critical condition.

Prof Nazrul Islam, virologist and former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, stressed the need for strong monitoring to prevent misuse of the antiviral drug.

At a round table discussion on swine flu held at the office of the Prothom Alo, he said wearing mask is a must to prevent the infection of swine flu.

"At the same time, personal hygiene should be maintained strictly and the government should take more precautionary measures to combat the attack of the virulent H1N1 virus," he added.

Leaders of BNP and its front organisations placed floral wreaths on Saifur's coffin, which was covered with party flag, and stood in silence. Khandaker Delwar placed wreath on behalf of Khaleda Zia.

Those present at the janaza included former president Abdur Rahman Biswas, BNP leaders Delwar, Khandaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Abdullah Al Noman, Mirza Abbas, Nazrul Islam Khan, Rizvi



The bullet-riddled SUV of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

DHAKA MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7, 2009 15

## FRAUD IN AFGHAN ELECTION Votes from 447 polling stations cancelled

AFP, Kabul

results were to be released between September 3 and 7.

An IEC spokeswoman said Sunday she had "no idea" when the preliminary results would be released. Final results are due on September 17.

Even once preliminary figures are released, full results will have to wait until the allegations of irregularities are investigated by the ECC.

The commission on Saturday cancelled the release of the latest tranche of results blaming technical problems.

Throughout the laborious process of piecemeal announcements, the two main contenders for the presidency have each claimed victory.

Abdullah, formerly foreign minister, has also alleged widespread vote-rigging by Karzai's camp and has threatened to reject any result he regards as compromised.

He warned on Saturday that "state-engineered vote" fraud could fuel instability and Taliban insurgency and urged the international community to intervene.

"We have insecurity in this country. We have bad government. We have corruption. We have narcotics. We have a war. We have an insurgency," Abdullah told a news conference in Kabul.

He said a rigged election would hand another "excuse" to the increasingly deadly insurgency against the Western-backed Afghan authorities and foreign troops.

There have been fears that the results could effectively divide the country. Abdullah has his powerbase in the north, among ethnic Tajiks, while Karzai is influential in the Pashtun-dominated south.

Nato and Western allies have stressed in recent days their long-term commitment to keeping troops in Afghanistan to fight a resurgent Taliban, despite concerns about fraud and low turnout in the elections.

A Nato air strike in northern Kunduz province on Friday, which officials said killed scores of people, revived controversy over Western military operations that kill civilians as well as the intended insurgent targets.

A local official said 54 people had been killed in the strike, as well as another two who were murdered by Taliban militants just before.

## Aug 21 attack

FROM PAGE 1

pellets," reads the report that was also tagged with the charge sheet.

Mahbub, one of her personal staff, was protecting her in the shield and he was felled by a bullet near her vehicle, net by a large splinter."

Interestingly, ballistic experts' opinion in the charge sheet contradicts the INTERPOL findings.

The CID experts said the marks on the then opposition leader's jeep are not left by bullets. Rather, they had been caused by spherical metallic balls used in a special type of grenade.

Asked why he included in his charge sheet the diametrically opposed opinions of local and INTERPOL experts, ASP Fazlul Kabir said he did this because he did not want to draw any conclusion of his own.

Queried what in his opinion explains the scars more logically, he said he subscribes to the views of their ballistic experts.

Talking to The Daily Star on Thursday, he went on to dismiss the INTERPOL findings as an "international blunder".

Kabir, who took over as IO during the caretaker government rule, said, "We brought the damaged jeep to our office and examined it minutely. I think our experts' report is more authentic and acceptable."

About death of Hasina's personal staff Mahbub, he said the post-mortem report says his body bore no bullet wounds.

Fairness and credibility of the August 21 grenade blasts investigation came into question from the outset.

## Tributes for Saifur

FROM PAGE 1

the capital.

Before laying him to eternal rest, another namaj-e-janaza for him will be held at Shahi Eidgah in Sylhet and the last janaza at Moulvibazar Government High School ground.

Meanwhile, BNP yesterday started a three-day programme to mourn Saifur's death with party flag hoisted at half-mast and black flag at the party central office in the city.

It was attended by, among others, Speaker Abdul Hamid, Deputy Speaker Col (retd) Shawkat Ali, Chief Whip Md Abdus Shahid, former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, Opposition Chief Whip Joynal Abdin Faroque, ministers, members of parliament, Dhaka city mayor. People from all sections of the society joined it.

Jamiruddin Sircar and Joynal Abdin Faroque placed wreath on the coffin on behalf of Khaleda and State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak on behalf of the ruling Awami League.

Prior to the janaza, Naser Rahman appealed to those present to pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Saifur died in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Ashuganj.

We stand corrected.

## Two more killed

FROM PAGE 16

The party members opened fire on police when they were asked to surrender, police said. As the police retaliated, a gunfight ensued that left Hanu

His accomplices, however, managed to flee the scene.

Police recovered a gun and five bullets from the spot.

Hanu was accused in several cases including three for murder filed in Kushtia and Chuadanga police stations.

In Faridpur, a detective team of Rab came across a gang of robbers at Haat Krishnapur at about 3:30am.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the gang took shelter in Krishnapur Primary School and opened fire on Rab personnel prompting them to retreat.

He said the price of sugar rose abnormally in the international market over the one and half months and the price was recorded at US\$540-542 per tonne from its previous price at \$506-510, a month earlier.

He was convicted in 13 cases including a murder case.

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15

The PDB will float tender for the rental plants on September 10 with a target of awarding the contracts by November 19 this year.

The rental plants are: a 100-MW diesel-fired plant in Bheramara and three 50-MW diesel plants in Rajshahi, Thakurgaon and Syedpur.

At the same time there will be two 100-MW HFO plants in Madanganj, Jessor, a 50-MW HFO plant in Barisal and a 30-MW HFO plant in Jamalpur.

The PDB has proposed setting up these eight rental power plants to be implemented by mid-2010.

Four large 500-MW coal-based power projects are also expected to be implemented by 2013.

Sources said the ministry and the PDB are facing tremendous pressure from the business lobby that wants to have all power projects whether they qualify for the job or not.

Two previous governments between September 2006 and April 2008 awarded four rental power contracts for a total of 167 megawatt to inexperienced local companies for a 15-year term. Of them, one failed to launch its 51-MW plant.

Last year, the caretaker government awarded eight more three-year rental power contracts except one to local inexperienced companies. Of them, four managed to launch operation while the rest with a total capacity of 180 MW failed to start operation as per the schedule.

Power Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Energy Secretary Mohammad Mohsin and PDB Chairman ASM Alamgir Kabir, among others, were present at the meeting.