

# Israel seals off West Bank amid tension

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel sealed off the West Bank yesterday amid tension in Jerusalem over controversial plans to build new homes for Jewish settlers and fears of fresh violence at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.

Israeli police also barred men under the age of 50 from prayers at the site of the mosque compound, which is holy to both Muslims and Jews.

A few isolated incidents broke out after the noon prayers.

Four young Palestinians were arrested after several youths hurled stones near Jerusalem's Old City, where the mosque is situated, police said.

Security forces used stun grenades to disperse the protesters, one of whom threw a brick that smashed the windshield of a car in which a family of settlers was travelling.

Defence Minister Ehud Barak earlier

ordered the army to seal off the Israeli-occupied West Bank until midnight on Saturday, an army spokesman said, citing a heightened risk of attacks.

Since the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in September 2000, Israel has sealed off the West Bank ahead of major holidays, but only rarely on other occasions.

The closure was announced one day after US Vice President Joe Biden concluded a visit of the West Bank and Israel aimed at promoting renewed peace talks but marred by an announcement that 1,600 new settler homes would be built in predominantly Arab east Jerusalem.

The announcement infuriated the US administration, ignited international condemnation and cast doubts over the outlook for the indirect talks, which the Palestinians had reluctantly agreed to hold after a 14-month hiatus in negotia-

tions. US Middle East envoy George Mitchell on Thursday called Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, who is on a visit to Tunisia, to press him to go ahead with the planned talks, a Palestinian official said, asking not to be named.

But Abbas demanded US guarantees that Israel first freeze the project to build new homes in the east Jerusalem settlement of Ramat Shlomo.

Abbas told US officials that "it is very difficult for us to go to any negotiations, direct or indirect, without the cancellation of the Israeli building project," Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP on Friday.

The US State Department insisted on Thursday it had not heard anything to indicate the Palestinians had pulled out of the planned talks. It said the talks could still go ahead and pointed out Mitchell due back in the region next week.



Israeli police stand guard as dozens of Muslim worshippers say Juma prayers in the alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City on Friday after they were banned from entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

## Obama donates Nobel Peace Prize money

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington

US President Barack Obama has donated the \$1.4 million that came with winning the Nobel Peace Prize to charity, the White House said Thursday.

Obama divided the money up among 10 charities, with Fisher House, a non-profit that provides housing for families of patients being treated at military and veteran hospitals receiving the most at \$250,000.

The Haiti relief fund set up by former presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush will receive \$200,000.

The rest of the money will go to the College Summit, Posse Foundation, United Negro College Fund, Hispanic Scholarship Fund, Appalachian Leadership and Education Foundation, American Indian College Fund, Africare and the Central Asia Institute.



Supporters of deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra take part in a rally in Bangkok yesterday. Tens of thousands of supporters of deposed Thaksin began to mass in their trademark red shirts ahead of weekend protests in Bangkok aimed at toppling the government.

## Tensions as Thaksin protesters converge to topple govt

AFP, Bangkok

Tens of thousands of supporters of deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra began to mass yesterday in trademark red shirts ahead of weekend protests in Bangkok aimed at toppling the government.

Around 6,500 protesters staged early demonstrations in the capital before dispersing after several hours while thousands more gathered in the rural north before starting their journey to Bangkok for the main rally on Sunday.

Organisers insist the protests will be non-violent, but the government is rolling out a 50,000-strong security force and has enacted a tough security law that allows authorities to impose curfews and limit movements.

"I am joining the demonstration to call for democracy and to end the double standards. We come of our own free will," said Saket Khosri, 46, a Bangkok housewife attending one of the downtown rallies, billed as a warm-up to Sunday.

The bright red-clad crowd made its way along a main Bangkok thoroughfare, most on foot and on motorbikes and tuk-tuks, before dispersing mid-afternoon.

## US sees some rights progress in S Asia

AFP, Washington

The United States said Thursday it saw progress in human rights in parts of South Asia last year, as Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal all solidified democracy.

The positive signs belied a grim situation in much of South Asia, where the US State Department found widespread rights problems in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It reported that US-backed governments in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq had mixed records last year.

The report said Sri Lanka violated human rights last year as it dealt a final blow to Tamil Tiger insurgents and clamped down on media freedom, but there were some signs of progress following the victory by government troops.

In its annual report, the State Department reported widespread concerns in Nepal about extrajudicial killings, human trafficking and impunity for perpetrators of violence.

But it said that overall respect for human

rights "improved slightly" thanks to a multi-party government, which gave access to international human rights monitors and tried to better enforce anti-trafficking laws.

The State Department said human rights were improving in Bhutan after the Himalayan state transformed into a democracy in 2008, ending a century of absolute monarchy.

But the report said that some discrimination remained against the Nepalese minority in the predominantly Buddhist country.

Similarly, the State Department reported progress in Maldives since former political prisoner Mohamed Nasheed won elections in the archipelago in 2008.

"The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens and upheld civil liberties," the report said.

The report said the junta in Myanmar continued its "egregious human rights violations and abuses during the year," including increased military attacks in ethnic minority regions, such as in the Karen and Shan states.

## Iraqi opposition alleges 'flagrant' election fraud

Maliki in tight race to hold on to his job

AFP, Baghdad

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki was locked in a tight contest to hold on to his job yesterday, as election results from Iraq's polls trickled in and opposition blocs alleged blatant fraud.

Maliki faces a strong challenge from ex-premier Iyad Allawi, whose secular Iraqiya bloc has emerged as the strongest challenger to the incumbent's hopes of retaining his post, initial voting figures showed.

Iraqiya has alleged that fraud took place during Sunday's polls in favour of Maliki's State of Law Alliance, a charge dismissed by the latter bloc as exaggerated.

"There has been clear and flagrant fraud," charged Intisar Allawi, a senior Iraqiya candidate and relative of the former prime minister.

"There were persons who manipulated or changed the figures to increase the vote in favour of the State of Law Alliance."

She said Iraqiya's own election observers had found ballot papers in garbage dumps in the northern disputed province of Kirkuk.

But Hassan Sinaid, a senior State of Law candidate, described those claims as "exaggerated."

"This is propaganda from certain lists. The elections took place in a good atmosphere and

the results reflect the views of the Iraqi people," he said.

Meanwhile, the national election commission said the claims of fraud were either politically motivated or fuelled by a misunderstanding of the counting procedures.

But it would still investigate any complaints it received.

"We are used to receiving these accusations from political blocs because either they do not know our procedures or they have not had good results in the election," said Iyad al-Kinaani, an Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) official.

"That is why they are talking about fraud."

A Western diplomat agreed with Kinaani's account, noting that "the complexity of the election explains the accusations made by different parties."

"We are relatively relaxed because there have been fewer complaints than the last election (in 2005) and fewer ballot boxes have been put in quarantine," the diplomat said, on condition of anonymity.

"There is no reason to get worried at this time."

IHEC official Qassim al-Abboudi added, referring to Iraqiya, that "one political entity... rushed to publish incorrect facts."

## Britain 'one of world's worst places to raise kids'

ANI, London

Planning to shift to Britain with your entire family? Well, then please take note: The United Kingdom is one of the worst places in the world to raise a child.

According to a survey of expatriate parents, living and working in the United Kingdom is a tough task and one has to struggle to get good quality childcare and education.

Arranging education in Britain was found to be harder than in any of the other five countries involved in the survey commissioned by HSBC, including Australia, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates, reports The Telegraph.



A stela at the Egyptian museum in Cairo is seen Thursday, showing Pharaoh Akhenaten, his Queen Nefertiti and their children worshipping the sun in the more natural artistic style of the time.

## Mummy of Egypt's monotheist pharaoh to return home

AP, Cairo

The DNA tests that revealed how the famed boy-king Tutankhamun most likely died solved another of ancient Egypt's enduring mysteries: the fate of controversial Pharaoh Akhenaten's mummy.

The discovery could help fill out the picture of a fascinating era more than 3,300 years ago when Akhenaten embarked on history's first attempt at monotheism.

During his 17-year rule, Akhenaten sought to overturn more than a millennium of Egyptian religion and art to establish the worship of a single sun god. In the end, his bold experiment failed and he was eventually succeeded by his son, the young Tutankhamun, who rolled back his reforms and restored the old religion.



Chinese rescuers gather to look for survivors after a landslide buried homes in Zizhou, north China's Shaanxi province on Friday. A 20-year-old man was rescued from the mud and rubble of a massive landslide in north China after being buried for 54 hours as the death toll rose to 27.

## Toxic Chaos \$657 million deal for Ground Zero workers

AFP, New York

More than 10,000 people who worked in the toxic chaos of New York's Ground Zero after 9/11 could receive compensation totaling 657 million dollars for health problems under a deal reached Thursday.

Thousands of plaintiffs, mostly firefighters, police and construction workers, have sued the city for what they say are health problems connected to work in the debris of the World Trade Centre, which was destroyed in the September 11, 2001 attacks.

On Thursday, the head of an insurance company that was funded with federal dollars to insure New York City against claims by many of the plaintiffs related said a potential deal to pay out up to 657 million dollars (479 million euros) had been reached.

"We have reached a settlement that is fair under difficult and complicated circumstances," said Christine LaSala, president of WTC Captive Insurance company, which holds one billion dollars in federal funds set aside for health related claims stemming from the clean-up, recovery and restoration efforts.

## 25 killed in Kazakhstan flooding

AP, AFP, Almaty

Heavy rain and melting snow have caused severe floods across a region of Kazakhstan neighbouring China, flooding villages and claiming at least 25 lives, emergency officials said yesterday.

Southern Kazakhstan was affected by unusually intense snowfalls this winter and fast-rising temperatures are now causing massive flooding and mudslides across the region.

The Emergency Services Ministry said a dam at the Kyzyl-Agash reservoir in the eastern Almaty region ruptured Thursday, pouring water into several nearby villages and affecting 3,000 residents.

The head of the Emergency Services Ministry crisis centre, Serik Turar, said that 25 or more people have been killed in the floods.

Officials says residents in the affected Aksu district have been notified of the danger and are being evacuated in buses sent from the regional capital, Taldykorgan.

In another part of the same region, heavy rain and thawing snow eroded a levee in the village of Zhylybulak, flooding 140 households and affecting 820 people.

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**INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE**

EDCL invites short dated International Tender for supply of Pharmaceutical Raw & Packing Materials on C&F © Chittagong by Sea / Dhaka By Air / Benapole by Road basis :-

S.L No.	Tender No. Date	Name of the Item	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & opening
01.	IMP/R&PM/SEM/32/2009-2010 dated 11/03/2010	<b>Pharmaceutical Raw Materials:</b> 1. Dextrose Anhydrous BP'2010 2. Tri-Sodium Citrate BP'2010  <b>Pharmaceutical Packing Materials:</b> 1. Printed Aluminium Foil for ORS/Alum N	Tk. 2000.00/set Equivalent to US\$ 30.00 Non-refundable	Closing : 25/03/2010 at 03.00 PM  Opening : 25/03/2010 at 03.15 PM

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of **Essential Drugs Company Limited, Dhaka** on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

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Director Operation & Incharge  
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For : Managing Director.

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Managing Director, **Polash Urea Fertilizer Factory Ltd.**, Polash Narsingdi, invites sealed quotation (Single Envelope System) on PUFFL site delivery basis for supply of the following Materials:-

Sl. No	Tender No & Date	Name of Materials	Cost of tender document (Non-refundable)	Place of Submission of Tender	Date & Time of dropping	Date & Time of opening
1.	PUFFL/Com/19.108/09-10 Dt. 10-03-2010	Laboratory Chemicals (33 items)	Tk. 200/-	1. BCIC Head Office, Purchase Div. 30-31 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000. 2. GM (Comm.) PUFFL, Polash, Narsingdi.	Dt. 30-03-10 Time 11.00 AM	Dt. 31-03-10 Time 11.00 AM
2.	PUFFL/Com/25.033/09-10 Dt. 10-03-2010	Electric Bulb	Tk. 300/-	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-
3.	PUFFL/Com/19.110/09-10 Dt. 10-03-2010	Multicores PVC Insulated Copper Tube	Tk. 500/-	-Do-	-Do-	-Do-

Tender documents will be available during office hour from the offices of (i) BCIC Head Office, 30-31 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000. (ii) BCIC Branch Office, 6, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong & (iii) PUFFL Accounts Deptt, Polash Narsingdi. Tender will be opened in the office of General Manager (Commercial), Polash Urea Fertilizer Factory Ltd., on the Date & Time mentioned above, in presence of Tenderers (if any). No tender documents will be sold on the date of dropping.

**(Md. Harun Al Rashid)**  
Manager (Purchase)  
For Managing Director.