Rights group raps Israel 'policy' of bombing Gaza homes

AFP, Jerusalem

An Israeli rights group yesterday criticised the government for what it called a deliberate policy of launching air strikes on homes that killed hundreds of civilians during last year's Gaza war.

In a report examining 70 raids on residential buildings in the besieged Palestinian territory, B'Tselem said Israeli officials were responsible for civilian casualties during the 50-day conflict that killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians.

"A hallmark of the fighting in Gaza this summer was the numerous strikes on residential buildings, destroying them while their occupants were still inside," the 49-page report said.

"This aspect of the fighting was particularly appalling" and was "the result of a policy formulated by government officials and the senior military command."

In the cases B'Tselem investigated, 606 people were killed, 70 percent of whom were under 18 or over 60. The United Nations says the con-

flict's Palestinian death toll was almost 70 percent civilian. The July-August conflict also killed

67 soldiers and six civilians on the Israeli side. B'Tselem said Tuesday that it had

not yet received a response from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office regarding the report, but the army rejected its allegations.

Truck attacked

FROM PAGE 1 while allegedly trying to explode a crude bomb at Kadamtoli in Chittagong, died in the capital's Apollo Hospitals early yesterday, reports our Chittagong correspondent. He was a Fazil student of Baitush Sharaf Madrasa in the port

With him the death toll in the blockade violence since January 5 rose to 35.

At least six vehicles were torched all over the country. One vehicle each was torched in Comilla (Daudkandi) and Magura, and two each in Dhaka and Bogra, said fire service officials.

To add to the sufferings of people, the BNP-led 20-party alliance called a daylong hartal in 11 districts including Dhaka for today protesting cases against BNP chief Khaleda Zia and remand of its acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in an

In the capital three passers-by were injured in crude bomb blasts. Asaduzzaman, aged around 27, was hit by a crude bomb around 8:30pm when he was crossing a street at Kalshi in Mirpur. He is a prospective judicial magistrate, said Syed Jiauzzaman, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station.

In two other incidents of blasts, Jonab Ali, 45, was injured at the TSC of Dhaka University and Nasiruddin, 30, was injured at Chhuritola in Old Dhaka.

In Barisal, locals handed over to police two Shibir activists, Ismail Hossain and Mizanur Rahman -both second-year students of Barisal Government BM College -- after they were caught trying to attack a vehicle in the city's Kashipur Bilbabari area

yesterday. Law enforcers arrested a local Jamaat leader in Chapainawabganj, a female leader of Islami Chhatri Sangstha of Jhalakathi Govt Girls College along with her brother in Jhalakathi, and nine BNP-Jamaat

men in Chittagong. Azhar appeals

FROM PAGE 16 The 62-year-old was awarded imprisonment on two charges. The court, however, acquitted him of the other

Citing the appeal, Shishir Manir, a lawyer for Azhar, told The Daily Star that the tribunal did not consider

many "contradictory" statements of the prosecution witnesses while pronouncing its verdict. The verdict against the Jamaat

leader is liable to be cancelled as it was "manifestly perverse", the plea

Shishir said Azhar in his 90-page appeal mentioned 113 grounds to establish his innocence.

A total of 2,250 pages of necessary documents were attached to the plea, he said, adding that the SC would

now fix a date for a hearing. The charges of which the ICT-1 found Azhar guilty include killing of 1,400 civilians in Jharuarbeel, a wetland in Rangpur's Badarganj upazila,

during the war.



New Saudi King Salman, right, walks alongside US President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama after the Obamas arrived at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

Michelle Obama forgoes headscarf in Saudi Arabia

AP, Riyadh

For US First Lady Michelle Obama, just a few hours in Saudi Arabia were enough to illustrate the stark limitations under which Saudi women live. Joining President Barack Obama for

a condolence visit after the death of the King Abdullah, Mrs Obama stepped off of Air Force One wearing long pants and a long, brightly colored jacket, but no headscarf. Her divisive decision not to cover

Abdul-Aziz Al Saud drew both criticism and praise across social media. Under the kingdom's strict dress code for women, Saudi females are

her hair as she met King Salman bin

required to wear a headscarf and loose, black robes in public. Most women in Saudi Arabia cover their hair and face with a veil known as the nigab. But covering one's head is not

required for foreigners, and some Western women choose to forego the headscarf while in Saudi Arabia.

As a delegation of dozens of Saudi officials, all men, greeted the Obamas in Riyadh, some shook hands with Mrs Obama. Others avoided a handshake but acknowledged the first lady with a nod as they passed by.

Saudi Arabia imposes many restrictions on women on the strict interpretation of Islamic Shariah law. Genders are strictly segregated.

In addition to this, women are

banned from driving, must be accompanied by a male chaperone when they leave the house and are not allowed to vote - although voting rules will change in 2015. Guardianship laws also require women to get permission from a male

higher education or undergo certain surgical procedures. Saudi state television also broadcast footage showing Michelle Obama with President Barack Obama and King Salman, where she could clearly

relative to travel, get married, enroll in

be seen without a headscarf. Other female guests were also visible with their heads uncovered.

Her decision not to cover her hair caused a stir on Twitter, where nearly 2,000 tweets with a hashtag that translates roughly '#MichelleObamanotveiled' were sent on the day of her visit.

4 more JMB operatives

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Motiur Rehman was a close associate of Shakil Gazi, who was killed in the October 2 blast at Beldanga in Murshidabad. He was allegedly the main person who used to maintain hideouts and training and bombmaking centres at Beldanga in Murshidabad, it added.

Habibur Rehman was a very close associate of Sajid, who was arrested earlier by the NIA. He allegedly used to maintain and run a terrorist training camp being run from Mukimnagar Madarsa in Murshidabad, the statement read.

Ghiyasuddin Munshi allegedly joined JMB with his wife and had undergone training with the outfit. He was allegedly engaged in providing safe shelter and hideouts and other facilities to senior Bangladeshi members of JMB.

According to the NIA, JMB members have so far established their network in different places like Murshidabad, Nadia, Malda, Birbhum, Bhurdman of West Bengal, Barpetta of Assam, and Sahibganj and Pakur of Jharkhand.

The investigators also claimed senior JMB members had established training centres and bomb-making

units in Beldanga and Mukimnagar of Murshidabad, Nanur of Birbhum and Khagraghar and Simulia of Burdwan

A court in Kolkata has meanwhile put the four arrestees on remand in NIA custody till February 3.

NIA counsel Shyamal Ghosh told the Metropolitan Court of Chief Judge Md Mumtaz Khan that the four were members of Bangladeshi terror outfit JMB who had taken arms and explosive training from experts.

He sought 10 days' remand in NIA custody so that investigators could unearth details of their involvement and other members and associates.

Ghosh also prayed for extension of NIA remand for Rezaul Karim, who had been arrested earlier in connection with the Burdwan blast, claiming he was a member of JMB and was involved in a conspiracy against India.

It was also claimed that Karim, a prized catch, had purchased raw materials for manufacturing improvised explosive devices.

No lawyer appeared for any of the accused.

An accidental blast in Burdwan while making explosives devices led to unearthing a major terror activity by JMB militants.

Delete 'secular', 'socialist'

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Constitution permanently," Sena MP Sanjay Raut said. "From the time they (the words)

were included in the Constitution, it is being said that this country can never be secular. Balasaheb Thackeray and before him Veer Savarkar had been saying that India was divided on the lines of religion. Pakistan was created for Muslims, thus, what remains is a Hindu Rashtra," Raut said.

The minority community has been used only for political gains, while "Hindus are being continuously disrespected," he alleged. "It is nowhere written in the

Constitution that you mete out such treatment to Hindus and use Muslims to garner votes," he said. "This mistake on the part of the

government has happened only because destiny wants this to happen. Modi is the prime minister of India, and his thoughts on Hindutva are strong," the Sena leader said.

omission of words "socialist, secular" from the Preamble to the Constitution appears to have been done with a clear agenda. And, to test

waters. issued by the Government on the

advertisement, Congress spokesman

Randeep Surjewala drew attention to the fact that the BJP has contested the inclusion of the words "socialist, secular" in the Constitution from its very inception.

The Congress described the omission of the two words from the Government's two Republic Day advertisements as a "sacriligeous insult" to the ethos of the Constitution. The Congress demanded an apology from the Government and also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should clarify his position and understanding of the words "socialist, secular".

On Tuesday, Congress leader Manish Tewari had attacked the Centre on the issue, claiming the government advertisement "deleted" the two words, which was only a prelude to their "substitution" with "communal" and "corporate".

"honour" the first Preamble.

Minister of State for I&B Rajyavardhan Rathore, however, was quick to dismiss the charge, saying his ministry had only used an "origi-The Congress yesterday said the nal" picture of the Preamble as it appeared before the Amendment, to

The advertisement showed a picture of the Preamble in the background with a quote from Prime Junking the various clarifications Minister Narendra Modi and pictures of some citizens in the foretwo wrist bones from dinosaurs. ground.

Protesters try to storm UN building in Gaza

AFP, Gaza City

Dozens of protesters yesterday tried to storm the Gaza headquarters of the United Nations, an AFP correspondent said, after the UN announced it lacked funds to rebuild the war-battered Palestinian territory. Around 200 people demon-

strated outside the building in Gaza City of the UN Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA, burning tyres and throwing stones. "We are still homeless!" they

chanted. Some tried to storm the build-

ing before police of the Islamist movement Hamas, the de facto power in Israeli-besieged Gaza, broke up the demonstration. The incident came a day after

UNRWA announced it can not afford to repair tens of thousands of homes damaged during the July-August war between Israel and Hamas because donors have failed to Some 100,000 people remain

homeless since the 50-day conflict, which killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians and 73 people on the Israeli side. UNRWA said cutting subsidies to displaced residents now renting

alternative accommodation could

force large numbers back to UN schools and centres which are already sheltering 12,000 people. Reconstruction has barely begun, with experts saying it will

take years even if Israel significantly eases its eight-year blockade on Gaza. A Hamas official has warned the

coastal territory could become a breeding ground for extremism unless promised reconstruction is accelerated.

PM criticises

of Precedence.

Warrant of Precedence is used for State and ceremonial occasions and

all other government purposes. Asaduzzaman had also told the media that the status of the attorney general would be above the cabinet secretary's and the district judges'

position would be equal to that of the secretary. However, the court on January 8 rebuked Asaduzzaman for explaining the court's observations in his own way although the SC did not disclose

its observations. On the same day, the court started further hearing of the appeal and again disposed of it on January 11 without giving any details of the

verdict. The court is yet to release the full text of this verdict too.

Can evolution

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certain animals can return to an earlier biological trait.

The remarkable discovery was made by finding birds had regrown a bone previously discarded by dinosaurs millions of years ago.

The study was carried out by a team of scientists from the University

of Chile led by Dr Alexandar Vargas. According to the Smithsonian Magazine, they studied fossils and

embryos of today's birds.

They found that 230 million years ago, two-legged dinosaurs no longer required the strong wrists of their four-legged brethren, and thus they became weak.

The number of bones in wrists shrank from 11 to three, with one in particular of interest to disappear being the pisiform. But according to research by Dr

Vargas, the bone reappeared when dinosaurs evolved into birds and took flight. The new bone, called the ulnare,

appears in the same place as the pisiform once did. The pisiform allowed bird wings to

remain rigid on the upstroke. The study found it disappeared in birdlike dinosaurs, but modern birds later evolved to once again use this tiny bone. "This idea that a bone can disap-

pear and reappear in evolution has been resisted a lot in evolutionary biology," Dr Vargas previously told LiveScience. Scientists don't know how these bones disappeared, though. Prof

Vargas said part of the problem is that palaeontologists look at fossils, while biologists focus on embryos. But his team brought the research together by looking at fossils as well

as studying bird anatomy. The team also found that a halfmoon-shaped bone called the semilunate in birds is the fusion of

Suffering, silently

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and grow up not as a sound human being who can contribute to the society's development, he said.

"Those growing with fear fail to see the goal of life or think freely. Many of them may even look at the violent activities as normal and eventually get involved in it," the psychologist observed. He also called on the media not to

widely expose the images of violence. Anxious parents say they do not

want to let their children step out of home nowadays because of the aggravating political situation. "You don't know when and how an

act of violence will happen," said a mother from Dhanmondi. She said the ongoing political

SSC exams

FROM PAGE 16 burning people and creating panic among all, he said.

"The only way to hold the examinations freely and safely is to put an end to hartal-blockade and violence. And the announcement has to come before the exams," Nahid said.

"Please don't jeopardise the future of our generation...don't confuse them," he added.

stress and may have long-term impact if continued for long, said Prof Dr Mohammad Sayadul Islam Mullick, chairman of psychology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical

unrest and violence had virtually taken

her children's harmonious life away as

their freedom of movement was

restricted. "Staying inside, they can

neither study nor play well," she

added.

University. Apart from children, the ongoing violence has also been causing a sense

of insecurity to tens of thousands of students. "I often feel very insecure and tend

to ask myself if my life has any value in this country," said Riti Florence, a college student in Dhaka.

A meeting source, wishing anonymity, said the ministry would wait until the day before the exams to see what announcement comes from the BNP.

"After the announcement from the

BNP, we will be certain of holding the exams on time or not," he said. "Holding the exams would be diffi-

cult even if the exams are kept out of the purview of blockade due to security reasons," he added.

becoming a problem for us and our

Quoting the emails, he said retailers

also urged the government to take

steps to stop the violence or it will have

an impact on the cost and delivery of

products. They might even consider

placing future orders if the current

of trips for our US merchandisers. This

will impact samples, thus impacting

where we place products," according

pay salaries to the workers, and only

the bank interest rates will pile up if the

situation does not improve as soon as

prevailing political stalemate, Tapan

Chowdhury, president of the BTMA,

said, "More than five crore people

Expressing concerns over the

Many factories will not be able to

"We are already cancelling number

situation persisted, he added.

Businesses demand the violence in Bangladesh? It is really

FROM PAGE 1

(BKMEA) and Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), among others.

The four-point memorandum demanded restoration of a businessfriendly environment, keeping intact the supply chain of the garment industries, ensuring safety and security of the garment goods and business, and legal actions against those responsible for hurting the industry. Later, the BGMEA boss, on behalf of

adviser MA Qaiyum and her special assistant Shimul Biswas at Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office. In the memorandum, Atiqul urged the BNP chief to keep the RMG sector

the trade bodies, handed over another

memorandum to BNP chairperson's

and blockade.

"We are planning further programmes if the memoranda don't work. We will wait for the responses from the political leaders," Atiqul told The Daily Star.

marked a fall by 30 percent in law few

messages to me to know about the orders they have placed. They are worried over the current political situation," Atiqul said.

are involved in the garment sector. We took to the streets to save the sector. Please do not give such programmes which will damage the industry."

Helal Uddin, vice-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), urged the political leaders to resolve the problems as soon as possible through discussions, not through

hurting the economy. Abdus Salam Murshedy, former BGMEA president and A H Aslam Sunny, acting president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters

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Detectives arrested Nurul Islam from a printing press, which he would run alongside teaching Islamic Studies at

Around 2:00am, a team of the Detective Branch (DB) of police took him to Nolkhola Ashrafer Mor to arrest his cohorts and recover firearms, said Muhammad Shamsuddin, commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, at a press briefing at the RMP

plices opened fire, hurled several crude bombs and tried to snatch Nurul away, prompting the DB men to open fire in retaliation. Nurul was hit by bullets while trying to escape and was declared dead at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital around 3:30am, said the RMP boss.

to have received bullets during the "gunfight" and admitted to Rajshahi Police Lines Hospital.

bombs were recovered from the scene, the RMP commissioner claimed.

Nurul was accused in over a dozen

cases in Rajshahi, according to police. The victim's family, however, thinks

the entire story was cooked up. "Police killed my brother in a planned way. They might have some past grudges as he was active in politics," said Nurul's brother Fazlul

Haque. "We will file a murder case against the police."

SATKHIRA SHOOTOUT Rafiqul Islam of Patkelghata was arrested on Wednesday afternoon in connection with a robbery at Kashemkhola village of Tala upazila, said Officer-in-Charge Tariqul Islam of

Patkelghata Police Station. To apprehend other members of Rafiqul's gang, police took him to Abhaytala around 3:30am when "his fellow robbers" opened fire on them,

forcing the law enforcers to retaliate. Caught in the line of fire, Rafiqul was bullet-hit and declared dead when taken to Satkhira Sadar Hospital, claimed the OC, adding a shutter gun, a machete and some bullet shells were recovered from the spot.

Rafigul's widow said her husband returned home about one and a half years ago after serving five years in prison in a robbery case. And he had no case filed against him at the moment.

US: Castro message 'positive sign' AFP, Washington Psaki said Washington now looked

The United States welcomed Tuesday

former Cuban leader Fidel Castro's belated response to the thaw in ties between the Cold War foes as a sign that change is under way in Havana. "We take his reference of 'interna-

Castro's letter was released.

ating with Cuban officials in Havana on restoring diplomatic ties, reopening embassies in their respective capitals and lifting some travel restrictions.

Such violence put people under

factories.

to an email.

possible, he said.

out of political programmes like hartal

It also called on Khaleda Zia to keep the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and other roads and highways out of the hartal and blockade so that the supply chain is maintained properly.

The BGMEA chief said work orders

days due to the political instability. "The retailers have started sending

Reading out messages from some

foreign buyers, Atiqul Islam said, "Is Association, among others, spoke on there anything we can do to help stop the occasion.

Jamaat leader

enforcement agencies. SHOOTOUT IN RAJSHAHI

Islamia Degree College in Rajshahi, at Malopara at 9:00pm Tuesday.

headquarters. Sensing police presence, his accom-

Two police constables were claimed A revolver, five bullets and 10 crude

implementing those international

norms and principles for a democratic, prosperous and stable Cuba." Last week, the highest-ranking US delegation in 35 years began negoti-

forward "to the Cuban government

tional norms and principles' as a positive sign," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters, after