

10 killed as bomb rips thru' bus in Israeli town

AFP, Jerusalem

At least ten people were killed and around 30 wounded yesterday when a bomb ripped through a bus in the northern Israeli town of Haifa, Israeli public television reported.

The bomb hit a bus in a residential area on the Carmel heights of Haifa city, the first bomb attack inside Israel since January 5 when two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up in central Tel

Aviv, killing 23 other people.

"The explosion occurred inside the bus, and was very powerful. There's almost nothing left of the bus," Gershon Zoberman, a fire brigade officer told public television.

Doron Keller of the Magen David Adom ambulance service told the television there were "dozens of casualties," as the bomb went off in the 129 bus going through Haifa, which has been hit by several suicide bomb-

ings on buses in the past.

Israeli government spokesman Avi Pazner called the deadly blast a "very grave attack" and said Israel would take "vigorous action against the terrorist organisations."

He told AFP Israeli intelligence had been dealing with at least 40 tip-offs of impending attacks when the Haifa bus was blown up.

Cricketers' muted return

SPORT REPORTER

Four years ago they received a hero's welcome. But yesterday there was no joy, let alone a red-carpet reception when the Bangladesh cricketers returned home after appearing in their second World Cup.

There were not many people around to jeer the crest-fallen stars after the Thai Airways plane landed at the Zia International Airport at midday.

Only a few journalists greeted the Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud and coach Mohsin Kamal with a volley of questions at an impromptu briefing where Mashud admitted that the 'deplorable batting' was the main reason for the debacle.

The team members later left the airport for the BCB's Gulshan office under police escort.

"The batting failure was respon

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FEELING LONELY? Bangladesh captain Khaled Mashud leaving the Zia International Airport under police escort after the national team returned from the Cricket World Cup 2003 in South Africa yesterday.

Truly dramatic

REUTERS, Johannesburg

The first phase of the 2003 World Cup has had everything - drugs, death threats, downpours and drama.

The only element it lacked was the one thing that, arguably, the tournament needed most - an Australian defeat.

Australia, huge favourites to defend their 1999 crown and become the first team to win three World Cups, could not have launched their campaign in worse fashion.

Shane Warne, in his swansong tournament, flew home without bowling a ball after failing a drugs test for diuretics. He said he had taken them to improve his appearance, not to mask other drugs.

For most sides, losing the most successful leg spinner in history would have been a body blow. For Australia, it seemed a mere detail.

Ricky Ponting's troops ended the first phase with six wins out of six, having crushed India and Pakistan on the way while recording an admittedly tight 14th win in a row over the English.

It will take something very special to beat them.

South Africa and Pakistan, touted as two major challengers to Australian rule, were not even special enough to make the second round.

South Africa agonised over everything - could they become the first hosts to lift the trophy, would they ever find a captain good enough to replace Hansie Cronje, should the ageing Allan Donald be axed, would they recover after Jonny Rhodes's broken hand?

The greatest agony of all came in their final game when, in an echo of their 1999 exit to Australia, they contrived to tie a rain-affected match with Sri Lanka and crash out at the first hurdle.

Pakistan, meanwhile, showed mere glimpses of their mercurial best. Soon they were losing to England and a Sachin Tendulkar-inspired India.

They left early with little to boast

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A slum behind an under-construction building in Tejgaon goes up in flames, sending plumes of smoke skywards yesterday.

PM tells JS Area of RAT activities to be expanded

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday hinted at reinforcing the Rapid Action Team (RAT) and providing logistic support to it to 'keep up the success' of the army-led 'Operation Clean Heart' against crime.

Replying to a question from Justice Mozammel Haq, she said law-and-order situation improved following the operation by the joint forces and the RAT was formed to sustain the success.

"Work is going on to expand the area of RAT activities and process is on to formulate a proper guideline in this regard," she told the law-makers during the PM's question hour in parliament.

Earlier, she told the House that her government attached top priority to good governance and

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Help drop Bangladesh from terror-risk list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has written letters to 26 US Senators and Congressmen, seeking their cooperation and support for dropping Bangladesh from the terror-risk list.

The opposition leader's letters were sent through facsimiles over the last week, ahead of an AL delegation's scheduled visit to the United States later this month to discuss with the appropriate authorities the recently promulgated regulation on registration of male citizens of Bangladesh.

In her letter to the Congressmen and Senators, Hasina requested them to spare time to listen to the AL delegation, which would be constituted with senior AL leaders as well as noted human rights activists.

"While the Bangladesh Awami League fully supports the global

campaign against terrorism, we are also deeply concerned at the decision of the US government to put this country (Bangladesh) in the terror-risk list," the letter reads.

Hasina also wrote, "As the president of the Bangladesh Awami League and leader of the opposition in parliament and as a former prime minister of Bangladesh, I'm seeking your support and cooperation to our request to the government of the United States to drop Bangladesh from the list of terrorist countries."

The identical letters were sent to 11 Senators -- Edward Kennedy, Hillary R Clinton, George V Volnovich, John D Rockefeller, Barbara Boxer, Chuck Hegel, Lincoln D Chafee, Norm Coleman, Paul S Sarvanes, Sam Brownback and John S Corzine -- and 15 Congressmen -- Howard Coble, Jeff Flake, M McHugh, Zoe Lofgren, A

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Entry into Myanmar minister's room DB quizzes state guesthouse staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives have been interrogating 13 employees of the state guesthouse Padma to find out who entered the room of the visiting Myanmar Foreign Minister U Wing Aung on Sunday night.

Wing Aung, who came to Dhaka Sunday on a two-day visit, left the state guesthouse at midnight, complaining somebody had entered his room.

The Detective Branch (DB) personnel said they came to know that stealing of dollars from the guests was common at Padma. Several complaints were lodged in this regard, but the situation did not improve.

Police, however, said nothing was stolen from the room.

"We are facing trouble in investigating the case as the Myanmar foreign minister left the country," ADC Ruhul Amin of the DB said. "We are trying hard to find out what really happened on that night."

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Call for hartal in Khulna, Bagerhat & Satkhira today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Greater Khulna Development Action Co-ordination Committee (GKDACC) has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira districts today to realise its 18-point demand.

The demands include development of Mongla port, construction of Mawa Bridge over the Padma, installation of pipeline for gas supply, completion of construction of Khulna airport and establishment of a full-fledged TV centre.

A procession was brought out in the city yesterday afternoon in support of hartal.

All political parties including BNP and socio-cultural organisations have extended their support to today's hartal.

A total of 26 trade unions in Mongla have also supported the hartal call.

During the hartal, cargo handling Mongla Port will remain stopped and road and river transport to and from Khulna will remain suspended, according to sources.

Unocal sued over gas patent

THE NEW YORK TIMES, New York

The Federal Trade Commission filed a complaint yesterday accusing the Unocal Corporation of fraudulent and anticompetitive practices in obtaining patents for the production of cleaner-burning gasoline.

In a suit filed with an administrative law judge at the agency, the F.T.C. contends that Unocal, which is based in El Segundo, Calif., misled California and other oil companies a decade ago when they were developing guidelines for cleaner gasoline for the state.

According to the complaint, Unocal, one of the largest independent oil and gas businesses in the United States, said certain research about the gasoline was not proprietary but then obtained patents on the process and began to charge others to use it.

As a result, the complaint said, Unocal acquired through the

patent process "monopoly power for the technology to produce and supply California" with the cleaner-burning gasoline, which companies are required to sell for eight months of the year. Many other refiners must pay Unocal to use the formulas it patented to produce the fuel for California.

The F.T.C. is asking the judge to prevent Unocal from using its patents, seeking what amounts to a

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 6		6-03 pm
Mar 7	6-17 am	
Prayer Timings		
Mar 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-08	6-13
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Expulsion won't be effective: Kamal

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Advocate AFM Kamal, a rebel mayoral candidate expelled from the BNP, held a press conference yesterday at Sylhet Press Club and claimed that his expulsion without a show cause notice would not be effective.

He said the party's central leadership had neither issued a show cause notice nor informed him beforehand that he would be expelled.

In the press conference, the BNP rebel candidate gave a detailed account of the major works during his two terms as Sylhet Pourashava chairman. Advocate Kamal reiterated his commitment to serving the

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AFM Kamal

BSF abducts 2 Bangladeshis

BSS, Rajshahi

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) personnel abducted two Bangladeshis from Karmadanga border area under Shapahar upazila in Naogaon district Tuesday afternoon.

The victims are Zahirul Islam, 32, and Lutfor Rahman, 35.

BDR sources quoting witnesses said a BSF patrol party from Malda Sector in West Bengal abducted the two when they were working in their land near border Pillar No 237 at about 4.30 pm.

BDR personnel of Karmadanga border outpost (BOP) yesterday sent a protest letter to its BSF counterpart urging them to sit for a flag meeting.

War against Iraq now likely: Russia

AFP, Moscow

Russia believes that a US attack on Iraq is now "likely," a top Russian foreign ministry official said yesterday, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

"Unfortunately, the latest indications are that a military operation is likely," Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov was quoted as saying.

"We want to avoid this and we are doing our utmost to convince the United States that there is no need to resort to article seven of the UN Charter on the use of force," he headed.

Mamedov said that Moscow expected the United States to

submit a new UN resolution authorising a military strike against Baghdad before the UN Security Council as early as Monday.

"I don't think it will be on March 7, but such a document might be submitted to the UN Security Council on or after March 10," he was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

In London Tuesday, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov refused to rule out the use of Russia's veto on the Security Council to strike down the US initiative and hinted strongly that Moscow would not -- as widely expected -- abstain.

