



PHOTO: AFP

A resident of Zafaraniya suburb of Baghdad walks wounded in the rubble of his home after an ammunition depot explosion in southern Baghdad yesterday, right, a grieving family comforts each other after losing eight members in the explosion.

Arms dump blasts kill 40 civilians in Iraq

REUTERS, Zaafaraniya

Up to 40 Iraqi civilians were killed and many badly hurt in a series of explosions near Baghdad yesterday, an Iraqi medic said after an arms dump blew up on the outskirts of the capital. US troops blamed unidentified attackers who fired four flares into the ammunition store, sparking explosions that shot missiles as far as three km away. But local people turned their anger on the Americans, shooting and forcing them back from the scene, soldiers said.

Some soldiers were wounded, an Army sergeant-major told Reuters at Zaafaraniya, a mixed residential and industrial suburb on the southern edge of the capital. A local medic travelling in an Iraqi civilian ambulance ferrying casualties between the blast scene and a hospital said there had been many victims. Asked how many were killed, he replied: "Forty." The head doctor at Zaafaraniya hospital, Shaker Nasser, said his unit had received six dead and 13 wounded, adding that other hospitals

in the capital were also taking casualties. "This morning at eight o'clock I watched rockets land near my house and I hid on the ground," he told Reuters. Local resident Tamir Kalaal said 14 of his relatives, including his father, brother and wife, were killed when a rocket destroyed his home. "I am the only one that survived. All I have left is her," he told Reuters, sobbing and pointing to his one-month-old daughter. "Those Americans did this," he said, shaking

his finger in anger. Near the scene, US Army Sergeant-Major Gary Coker said many people were trapped in buildings. The series of intense explosions began at about 8 a.m. local time and seven hours later sporadic blasts were still being heard. "Hostile forces fired four flares into an ammunition storage area. One of the flares ignited an explosion and that set off a chain of explosions," US Army Captain Patrick Sullivan, from an engineering unit, said.

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In depths of despair

REUTERS, Zaafaraniya

A distraught Iraqi man said 14 of his relatives were killed yesterday when a rocket shot out of an exploding arms dump in the southern outskirts of Baghdad and destroyed their home. Tamir Kalaal said he survived because he was away from home when the rocket struck, killing his wife, father, brother and 11 other members of his family. "I am the only one that survived. All I have left is her," Kalaal told Reuters, sobbing and pointing to his one-month-old daughter. An elderly woman, Hasna

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Unite to uplift HR state in South Asia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Delegates from four South Asian countries including Bangladesh yesterday presented a gloomy picture of human rights situation in their respective countries and urged the people of the region to take a common stand for improving the situation. On the other hand, former Indian prime minister of India and Chairman of South Asia Human Rights I K Gujral warned the people of the South Asia about the impact of an 'emerging neo-imperialism in world politics'. "The ominous shadow of the post-Iraq war is creeping in our direction and the purpose of neo-imperialism is not confined to acquisition of oil source only but is also to re-establish ears of hegemony," he said.

He urged the people of South Asia to face the emerging threat by standing together. The delegates were speaking at an exchange of view meeting at the Supreme Court (SC) Bar Association auditorium. "It is time that we too take our destiny in our own hands and assert that no more wars will be fought on the soil of South Asia, and that the sacred soil of our ancient lands will never witness the murder of innocents by the terrorists," Gujral said. He also reminded the experiences in the 19th century when one state after another in the region fell in the grip of colonialists due to lack of trust in their neighbours. Former chairman of Pakistan Human Rights Commission Asma

Jahangir, human rights activists S Balakrishna from Sri Lanka, D Pandey from Nepal and Dr. Kamal Hossain from Bangladesh also addressed the meeting. President of the SC Bar Rokonuddin Mahmud gave the welcome address and Barrister Sigma Huda presided. The former Indian prime minister underscored further strengthening of the SARRC for eradication of poverty and terrorism which, he said, are the common features in the countries of the region. Gujral appreciated the recent development in Bangladesh, particularly in sectors like poverty alleviation, agriculture and improvement of the condition of women.

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CPD-Prothom Alo-The Daily Star dialogue in Ctg Reforms far away from implementation

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, from Chittagong

A range of reforms in the financial sector could not bring the desired result because of various problems, discussants at a dialogue yesterday observed. They said amendments to a raft of laws were made for effective enforcement of banking regulations, fixation of interest rate of commercial banks, rescheduling and writing off loans, merger of losing bank branches and formulation of large loan policy. Despite the efforts, they said, the

default loan culture continued to present a drag on the national economy as the outstanding loans soared to Tk 24,000 crore. They were addressing the second session of the dialogue, organised by the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star at Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) yesterday. The session was dedicated to the banking sector. The dialogue initiated a fresh round of consultations to review the recommendations made by 16 task forces

formed prior to the October 2001 ballot. Chaired by Dr Moinul Islam, economist and former president of Bangladesh Economic Association, the session was also addressed by Ali Ahmad, former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), as chief guest. Dr Toufique Ahmed Chowdhury, professor and director of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM), presented the

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Criminals drug 3 cops to take away arms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown miscreants took away three firearms and 60 rounds of ammunition from as many police constables on night patrol on Alwal Avenue in the city's Uttara area early Saturday in an apparent drugging case, police said. They said the gang drugged the soft-drinks of Asaduzzaman, 25, Abdul Baten, 24, and Golam Dostagir, 25, and stole their arms when they fell unconscious in their patrol area at Sector-8 of Uttara Model Town. The police patrol was carrying two Chinese rifles and a shotgun. Shopkeepers found the intoxicated policemen in front of a row of shops on the eastern side of Alwal

Avenue at about 6:00am yesterday. They drew the attention of police sub-inspector Wahab, who was on a morning walk in the area. He quizzed them to establish their identity. Special Branch Sub-Inspector Hamid, who resides nearby, also went to the spot and informed Uttara police of the incident. Uttara police rushed them to Rajarbagh Police Lines, from where they were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment. They were later taken to the police lines yesterday evening. An empty Pepsi bottle was found on the scene and police said none of

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PHOTO: STAR

Three policemen, robbed of their rifles by miscreants who drugged them to unconsciousness at Uttara in city, undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Ten HC judges take oath today

Bar Association set to boycott ceremony, hold sit-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten newly appointed additional judges of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court (SC) would take oath today amid boycott of the ceremony by the SC Bar Association and also a sit-in demonstration by its members. A number of senior lawyers and leaders of the bar met Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury yesterday. Later, secretary of the bar Mahub Ali told journalists that the senior lawyers requested the chief justice to process the files of 11 additional judges whose services were not confirmed by the government. They also requested the chief justice to suspend the oath-taking ceremony till a final decision on the 11 non-confirmed judges is taken and to hold a meeting with the full court. Mahub Ali said the chief justice declined to suspend the oath-taking

ceremony. He (chief justice) said he had already delayed the oath-taking by a day to ensure transparency in this regard and also issued a letter announcing the ceremony. On the proposal for meeting with the full court, the chief justice told the senior lawyers that such a meeting could not be held in a couple of days, the bar secretary said. The chief justice however assured that he would do everything possible within the powers given by the Constitution to resolve the crisis, Mahub added. The senior lawyers included Dr Kamal Hossain, Dr M Zahir, Shawkat Ali Khan, Mahmudul Islam, Shafiq Ahmed, Sudhangshu Shekhar Haldar, Rokonuddin Mahmud and Mahub Ali. On Thursday, the government

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Export front sees snail's pace

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Little government initiative is visible to implement policies adopted to meet trade challenges in the changed global context although the government is well aware of tasks ahead. There has been no qualitative improvement in expanding the growths of export since the introduction of Policy Brief in 2001. Some policies were taken as per the recommendations, some were earmarked, but the status of their imple-

mentation is not clear while the fruits also remain to be reaped. The speakers made the observations at the first session of the daylong roundtable titled "Regional Consultation Meeting" of National Policy Review Forum 2003 held at Chittagong Stock Exchange yesterday. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star co-organised the meeting. At the first session of the roundtable on Foreign Trade, the speakers

emphasised systemic review of the announced policies and relevant preventive measures for expanding foreign investment and boosting foreign trade. However, they suggested that change and revision that might be required be transparent, assumable, impartial and accountable. Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) President Amir Humayun Mahmud

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