

Explosives found on Italian plane

REUTERS, Rome

Italian police discovered and safely removed explosives abroad an Alitalia passenger plane at an airport in eastern Italy after receiving an anonymous tip-off, a police source said yesterday.

The small package of explosives, which had been tucked under one of the seats, was destroyed in a controlled blast after it was found aboard the aircraft at Ancona airport on Thursday afternoon.

Police were examining passenger lists on Friday while forensic experts were trying to determine the exact nature of the explosives.

Italian news agency AGI said there was no fuse or detonator in the package and that it could not have exploded no matter what type of material it contained. AGI did not give a source for the report.

"This is an extremely serious and worrying incident which shows there are gaps in the security system," Andrea Tarroni, head of Italy's main pilots' union, told AGI.

"The level of protection of the air transport system is not sufficient," he said.

The 42-seater plane had been due to fly to the Italian capital Rome on a scheduled domestic flight from Ancona at 3 pm local time and passengers had not yet boarded the plane when the alarm was raised.

An airport source said the device was believed to have contained some 200 grams (seven ounces) of explosives which caused a large blast when detonated at a remote part of the airport.

Security services rushed to the airport following an anonymous warning to an Ancona police station. It was not clear who the caller was or why explosives were planted on the jet.

Italian media said the explosives were hidden inside a small box

Amnesty

FROM PAGE 1

"In yet another attack on press freedom in Bangladesh, warrants of arrests were issued on 11 June against Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, Motiur Rahman, the editor of the Prothom Alo, and Abdul Jalil, the General Secretary of the main opposition party, the Awami League," Amnesty said.

"This followed the publication, on 3 June, of a letter written by Abdul Jalil expressing his opinion about the candidacy of a Bangladeshi nominee for an executive position in an international organisation. The letter contained opinion critical of the nominee, a senior government official, who in turn filed a complaint before Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Court under sections of the Bangladesh Penal Code which provide for up to two years imprisonment for defamation," the Amnesty statement said.

It went on, Amnesty International would consider anyone detained in connection with the writing or publication of this letter as a prisoner of conscience. "The Government of Bangladesh must act now to stop the detention from happening."

The statement further said harassment of the two leading editors is in sharp contrast to a recent plea by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at a meeting of the South Asia Free Media Association that journalists should sharpen their pens "to write against narrowness, limited vision, conflict and disputes (to) build up powerful public opinion in South Asia in favour of peace, friendship, humanism and cooperation."

WMD hunt failures

FROM PAGE 12

gram.

"We ... introduced them to three defectors on the weapons program," Chalabi said. "We believe that he had valuable information about sites. He did not have any operational information because he was not a military man, he was an engineer who built sites for the weapons storage areas," Chalabi said.

"The second one we introduced them to, he told them about the mobile biological labs," Chalabi said, referring to the trucks US officials have pointed to as proof of Iraq's weapons program.

After meeting the third individual, US officials decided not to pursue contacts, Chalabi said.

The former Iraqi exile denied that any of his contacts exaggerated claims of Iraq's weapons program.

"There was no hyping of information. There was no information that was given that was not substantiated," he said.

Chalabi said he is certain that US forces will ultimately succeed in their efforts to find deposited Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction.

"There are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and Saddam had them and he was developing them continuously," Chalabi said after a meeting with congressional leaders here.

"I think if there is a correct way to look for them, then they will be found," he said.

The former Iraqi exile renewed his assertion that deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein remains here with about 30 US lawmakers on a range of postwar issues, including the pace of Iraqi reconstruction and the prospects finding Saddam.

"One of them was an engineer," Chalabi said. "We believe that he had valuable information about sites. He did not have any operational information because he was not a military man, he was an engineer who built sites for the weapons storage areas," Chalabi said.

"The second one we introduced them to, he told them about the mobile biological labs," Chalabi said, referring to the trucks US officials have pointed to as proof of Iraq's weapons program.

After meeting the third individual, US officials decided not to pursue contacts, Chalabi said.

The former Iraqi exile denied that any of his contacts exaggerated claims of Iraq's weapons program.

"There was no hyping of information. There was no information that was given that was not substantiated," he said.

Chalabi said he is certain that US forces will ultimately succeed in their efforts to find deposited Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction.

"There are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and Saddam had them and he was developing them continuously," Chalabi said after a meeting with congressional leaders here.

"I think if there is a correct way to

Hasina: Budget

FROM PAGE 12

men

She said the alliance government has increased duty and taxes on essentials, but reduced the duty on luxury items.

"This government, which claims itself as protectors of Islam, has reduced duty on liquors thereby exposing its true face," she said.

The Awami League chief blasted the alliance government for nominating Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury for the post of OIC Secretary General.

Criticising the government for the deteriorating law and order situation, she said the BNP-Jamaat government has presented the nation with dead bodies during its 19-month rule.

Chaired by outgoing president of UK Jubo League Harmuj Ali, the function was also addressed, among others, by AL Presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim MP and columnist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury.

Hasina's younger sister Sheikh Rehana, Jubo League president Jahangir Kabir Nanak and general secretary Mirza Azam MP were present.

The new committee of UK unit Jubo League was formed recently with Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury as president and Tariq Ahmed as general secretary.

Hasina, who arrived in London from USA on Wednesday, left for Dhaka yesterday.

AL rally

FROM PAGE 1

he said.

Abdur Razzak, another AL presidium member, said the government was encouraging anti-Bangladesh forces and the nomination of Chowdhury was part of it.

Amir Hossain Amu of the AL said Chowdhury alone did not decide on the case. Some BNP lawmakers influenced him to frighten the AL away from the movement, he said.

AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta said he had been calling Chowdhury 'razakar' since the end of the Liberation War, but he did not mind. Tofail Ahmed said Chowdhury killed people during the war and now filed the case only to show his vindictive attitude towards the pro-liberation people.

Motia Chowdhury chimed in, saying there is nothing wrong with calling a collaborator 'razakar'.

AL Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan and General Secretary of City AL Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya addressed the rally, among others. Mohammed Hanif, president of city AL, presided over it.

Some other organisations also protested the case against the editors.

The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal said that harassment of journalists amounted to suppressing press freedom and demanded scrapping of the law under which the case was filed.

The Computer Workers' Association of Bangladesh demanded withdrawal of the case against the editors.

The president of Jatiya Olama Mashaikh Oikya Jote, Moulana Shaohk Khandakar Golam Maola, and its General Secretary Mufti Moulana Abdul Halim Siraji also demanded withdrawal of the case.

They said Chowdhury was unfit for the nomination and called upon the government to drop him from the OIC race.

Kashmir blast

FROM PAGE 12

in the same district, Indian troops killed two militants, one of them a Pakistani national, in two separate encounters, police said.

A mother and her son were injured during one of the gun battles. Police said suspected rebels shot dead two Muslims in the southern district of Doda overnight after barging into their houses.

In the same district security forces recovered 33 kilograms of deadly Research Developed Explosives, or RDX, eight grenades and other arms, a police spokesman said.

Hasina returns

FROM PAGE 12

today, said a party press release.

During her month-long trip, she attended a socialist party congress in France, visited her son and daughter in Florida, USA, and then spent a few days with her sister Sheikh Rehana in the UK. She also attended the council of UK unit of Jubo League.

Her stay in the USA was prolonged due to the death of USA unit president of AL Dr Enayetur Rahim.

During her absence, AL lawmakers abstained from the budget session of the parliament. Hasina is scheduled to chair a meeting of the AL Parliamentary Party (ALPP) at Sangsad Bhavan tomorrow.

"The ALPP meeting will decide whether we should or shouldn't join the rest of the sittings of the budget session," said AL general secretary Abdul Jalil.

Moulvibazar

FROM PAGE 12

BSS adds: The low-lying areas in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmoinarhat, Gaibandha and Kurigram districts have been inundated due to sharp rise of water levels in the rivers.

Nearly 30,000 people have so far been marooned in several upazilas.



Local traders protest the killing of businessman Ajit Talukdar burning tyre and putting up a barricade on Hathazari-Rangamati road yesterday.

Anti-poverty vision missing

FROM PAGE 1

ment of the budget.

Presented by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, the budget is mainly based on a high foreign aid flow and an ambitious target of revenue collection, said Debapriya.

He fears if the government fails to fulfil the conditions set by multilateral agencies, they may stop providing further assistance. "Increased foreign aid may also hamper the government's revenue earning process," he said.

About the proposed annual development programme (ADP) of Tk 20,300 crore, he said the budget dose not provide any significant formula for implementation of the ever-large ADP.

Only 50.7 per cent of the ADP for FY2002-03, with its revised figure of Tk 17,100 crore, has been implemented until March, Debapriya noted from an IMED (Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division) report.

Saifur did not present any specific measure to ensure the accountability of ministers in implementation, nor did he mention the law and order slide in his budget speech, which has a negative impact on business, Debapriya said.

Inefficiency in the utility sector, port problems, delay in separation of the judiciary, lax decentralisation of the local government, non-formation of an independent anti-corruption commission and slow privatisation are among the topics the finance minister ignored, he said. "These are extremely needed for investment to rally."

The minister did not reveal the reform plan agreed by the government with development partners

during the recent Bangladesh Development Forum meeting, he said.

Saifur attempted to change the format of restructuring the economy but never mentioned the way, he said.

However, Debapriya applauded the budget for providing discreet support for agro-based industries, textiles and readymade garment sector.

Saifur proposed an allocation of Tk 50 crore for agro-based industries, as the government utilised only Tk 31.5 crore of Tk 100 crore allocated in the outgoing fiscal.

Reduction in corporate tax from 30 per cent to 10 per cent up to June 2006 will provide the sector with a breathing space, said Debapriya.

Lessening and re-fixing the corporate tax at 20 per cent for textiles for the same period will help the sector sustain in the post multifibre agreement (MFA) reality, he said.

He suggested that withdrawal of value-added tax (VAT) exemption on credit cards should not be applied on customers.

The withdrawal of VAT on travel agencies will not boost tourism, as the sector's development does not depend much on it but largely on infrastructure and law and order, he said in his assessment report.

Increase in customs and supplementary duty on sugar will up the price of sugar on the domestic market and encourage smuggling, he said. Upswing in supplementary duty on powdered milk and salt will tax commoners.

Debapriya criticised the budget for extension of concession on import of reconditioned taxicabs

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

CPD research fellows Anyana Raihan, Uttam Deb, Fahmida Akhter Khatun and Head of Dialogue and Communication Anisatul Fatema Yousuf attended the briefing.

and said it will deteriorate urban pollution. Reduction in supplementary duty on spirit, wine and other alcoholic drinks has also been criticised.

However, he appreciated the increase in customs duty on rice to 22.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent.

Debapriya identified three major factors as instrumental in implementation of the budget: flow of private investment, resurgence in exports and implementation of ADP.

US forces kill 97

FROM PAGE 1

US officials have released no other details on the camp, though one said the military believed that some of those present were not Iraqis. Arab volunteers from several countries fought with Iraqi forces during the war launched on March 20.

AFP adds from Makhoul: Fires blazed on a major pipeline from Iraq's northern oilfields yesterday after what residents said were twin bomb attacks aimed at sabotaging exports through Turkey.

An AFP correspondent saw two separate fires on the pipeline, 15 km from the key refinery town of Baiji, close to the main highway between Baghdad and the northern regional capital of Mosul.

US military helicopters hovered overhead.

Residents questioned by the news agency at the nearby Al-Amin coffee shop said the pipeline had been attacked by Iraqis using explosives around 8:45 pm local time Thursday, the same day Iraq awarded its first post-war oil export contracts.

"We heard two explosions and ran," said the coffee shop's owner, Abu Ala. "We saw fire shooting out of the pipeline in two places. Shortly afterwards two American helicopters arrived."

Customers said it had been a deliberate act of sabotage.

"Some Iraqis came and blew it up," said Kazem Ibrahim.

"It's to stop the Americans taking the oil out to Turkey," said Khidir Aziz.

Some 225 km north of Baghdad, Baiji is home to a major refinery and power station, processing fuel from the oilfields around the northern city of Kirkuk.

Less than an hour's drive north of Saddam Hussein's native city of Tikrit, the mainly Sunni Arab region around Baiji was considered a stronghold of his Sunni-dominated regime and several residents expressed hostility to the US-led occupation.

"The Iraqis won't change. If Saddam disappears, there will be 20 others emerging every day," said Hussein Abu Ali.

On Thursday, Iraq's US-led administration awarded a raft of contracts to international oil companies to lift crude, the first since the US-led war.

A coalition spokesman said the

contracts were for exports from the southern oilfields around Basra and the lifting of Kirkuk crude through the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan at the other end of Iraq's northern export pipeline.

Meanwhile, US troops detained 74 suspected Al-Qaeda sympathisers in a raid in northern Iraq, Central Command said yesterday in its first explicit claim of involvement by Osama bin Laden's Islamist militant network in post-war unrest here.

"The 173rd Airborne Brigade conducted a raid Thursday near (the northern oil capital of) Kirkuk after receiving intelligence information about alleged anti-coalition elements. They apprehended 74 suspected Al-Qaeda sympathisers," Centcom said in a short statement.

US commanders have thus far put the main blame for deadly attacks against coalition troops here on loyalists of the ousted regime of Saddam Hussein although they have acknowledged that foreign "fanatics" might also have had a role.

Separately, US troops launched a massive operation in northwestern Iraq before dawn Thursday against what the coalition said was a "terrorist training camp."

Military spokesmen in Baghdad said they could give no further details on that operation as it was still ongoing yesterday.

Reuters adds: The main oil export pipeline linking Iraq and Turkey was hit by fire and explosions due to a gas leak, US authorities in Iraq said yesterday.

Turkey said investigations were under way to establish whether sabotage was to blame for the blast at the Iraqi section of the pipeline in northern Iraq late on Thursday.

US military spokesmen said there was no sign that sabotage had caused the explosions, which comes after occupying US forces have blamed saboteurs for undermining their efforts to restore the oil industry.

"There is no evidence that there was any hostile intent. US and Iraqi engineers are assessing the extent of the damage," a spokesman told Reuters.

charges against him involving the sugar shipments.

He was taken to hospital with a kidney complaint in 2002 and soon afterwards returned to Sydney to live with a daughter who had settled here.

The Herald said it understood he was granted a disability pension because of his kidney condition.

The Dhaka court was told that as prime minister in 1989, Ahmed had allocated grain for works on a landfill site where his government planned to build a cancer hospital, but the supplies were later sold on the black market.

Ahmed was also reported to have been implicated in the theft and sale of millions of dollars worth of sugar donated for flood and disaster relief in his country.

Howard said the first he heard of the matter was when he read it in the newspaper, and found it puzzling but would investigate why the man was granted refugee status.

"The decision was apparently taken by the department without, apparently -- as the newspaper report said -- any reference to the minister," he said.

"On the face of it, it seems a puzzling decision, but there may be a proper explanation, to be fair to the people who made it. I don't know anything beyond what is in the papers, but I intend to find out this morning."

Powell arrives

FROM PAGE 1

discuss various issues, said the press notice.

This is the highest level visit of any US dignitary to Bangladesh since former US president Bill Clinton's visit in 2000, and is considered very important in the backdrop of the fall of Saddam Hossain's regime in Iraq and the current peace process in the Middle East.

Foreign Ministry sources said Powell would hold official talks with Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan where both regional and international issues of common concerns would figure prominently.

The US State Department's press notice praised Bangladesh for making solid progress in building democratic institutions and termed it as a voice of moderation in the Muslim world and a steadfast partner in the war on terrorism.

Prior to coming to Bangladesh, Colin Powell will attend a meeting in Cambodia to be organised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Phnom Penh

on June 18 and the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference on June 19.

In the meetings, he will discuss regional security issues and other international political and economic matters.

After visiting Bangladesh, Powell will travel to Jordan and attend the World Economic Forum to discuss the newly announced Middle East Free Trade Area and the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

Powell will also participate in a number of smaller meetings with regional economic and foreign policy leaders to explore US support for their efforts to expand economic, political and educational opportunities across the Middle East.

He will also meet the officials from the United Nations, European Union and Russia in Amman on June 22 to discuss ways of assisting Israel and the Palestinians in their efforts to end terror and violence and moving towards the goal of a peaceful two-state solution, the release added.