

2 more Marines killed in Iraq

Islamist group claims capture of 2 soldiers

AFP, Baghdad

Two US soldiers were killed in separate incidents in Iraq, one in Baghdad and the other near Hilla, south of the capital, the army said Friday.

Meanwhile, a previously unknown Islamist group claims to have captured two US soldiers in Iraq, Lebanon's LBCI satellite television reported Friday, showing what it said were photocopies of the pair's military identity cards.

The group, calling itself Fukat al-Madina al-Munawara, or Medina Faction, after the Muslim holy city in Saudi Arabia, named the two as Katherine V Rose and Andrew Peters, and said that they had been taken in a clash in which two US soldiers were also wounded, LBCI reported.

The US Army however denied the claim.

Spokesman Specialist Anthony Reinoso only confirmed that one soldier died after being caught in a fire at 4:30pm (1230 GMT) Thursday that broke out in a building on a shooting range in Baghdad's Karrada district.

He died 20 minutes later from smoke inhalation, Reinoso said, adding that six others were wounded.

It was not clear if the fire was accidental or a case of arson, he said. Earlier, a spokesperson had called the death "a fatality," but gave no further details.

In the second incident, a soldier with the Marine Expeditionary Force was killed near Hilla, 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Baghdad, said Sergeant Amy

Abbott.

The soldier was shot Thursday by an unidentified man who approached the sports utility vehicle he was being driven in as it was slowed by congested traffic, a statement from US Central Command said.

"According to initial reports, a male approached the vehicle, shot the service member, and ran into a crowded market area nearby," the statement said.

He was taken to the Forward Resuscitation Surgical System at Camp Babylon, where he was pronounced dead.

The Hilla killing brought to 64 the number of US soldiers killed in guerrilla attacks in Iraq since Washington declared major combat over on May 1.



PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh one-down Habibul Bashar executes a delicate sweep for four on way to his unbeaten 82 on the third day of the first Test match against Pakistan in Karachi yesterday.

Israel vows more strikes on Palestinian militants

REUTERS, AFP, Jerusalem/ Gaza City

Israel has vowed more attacks on Palestinian militants after killing a Hamas leader, a move that prompted major Islamic groups to abandon a truce crucial for a US-backed peace plan.

"This is only the beginning," a senior Israeli security source said on Friday, a day after a helicopter missile strike that killed Hamas leader Ismail Abu Shanab and two bodyguards in the Gaza Strip.

"We plan serious retaliation on the terrorist infrastructure," he said.

Israel hit Hamas hard after one of its suicide bombers killed 20 people aboard a Jerusalem bus on Tuesday.

Hamas called the bombing a one-off revenge attack for Israel's killing of its leaders, saying it did not affect the June 29 unilateral truce.

But after the death of Abu Shanab, considered second in Hamas only to spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, militant groups vowed to unleash violence anew in a revolt that erupted in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

MARS NOT A WATERY MASS

BBC ONLINE

Hopes that Mars once had vast oceans of water and perhaps microbial life have suffered a setback.

A US space agency (Nasa) spacecraft has failed to find evidence that the Red Planet was once a warm, watery world like the Earth.

This really points to a cold, frozen, icy Mars that has always been that way.

Scientists have been searching for decades for signs of water-related carbonate minerals on the Martian surface.

Mars Global Surveyor, which is orbiting the planet, has at last come up with the goods.

But it has found only traces of carbonates in dust, which probably came from the atmosphere rather than rocky outcrops deposited by oceans.

"What we don't see is massive regional concentrations of carbonates, like limestone," said Dr Joshua Bandfield, a planetary geolo

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Cough up Tk 700, get a fake licence at BRTA

AKBAR HOSSAIN

Organised gangs abetted by a dishonest set of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials have virtually taken charge of issuing counterfeit papers and licences for vehicles.

The gangs provide any applicant with a driving licence in a couple of days in exchange for Tk 500 to Tk 700 in the capital where, according to official statistics, more than 90 per cent of the driving licences and relevant documents are counterfeit.

A genuine licence costs an applicant up to Tk 5,000 depending on vehicles and may take more than a month for delivery. Besides, the genuine licence applicant has to sit for tests to qualify as licensee, a hurdle that the untrained drivers fear most and led them to go for counterfeits.

The drivers try to obtain fake licences also because the applicants are often harassed by BRTA officials and even asked to 'come to terms' to avoid harassment, said BRTA sources.

"The rackets have long been operating under the nose of the BRTA authorities and the communi-

cations ministry is well aware of it. But no action was taken against them," said a BRTA official.

"I have been working here for the last three years," said a fake licence middleman on condition of anonymity.

"I can give you driving licences for any vehicle at a cost of Tk 500 to Tk 700 and you can use them safely on any route in the city," he bragged.

He also provides fake registration certificate, insurance certificate, fitness certificate and route permit and the charges for certificates depend on vehicles.

The BRTA sources said most people who crowd the BRTA every day for licences seek counterfeits rather than originals. "The gangs have underhand dealings with a group of BRTA officials who promote the illegal business," said a source.

According to the Motor Vehicle Law of 1983, registration certificate, tax payment certificate and driving licence are required for all vehicles. But an investigation reveals that many private vehicle owners do not have tax payment certificates.

"To get a driving licence for a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

5 Barisal AL men sued for 'damaging' portraits of Zia, Khaleda

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Five activists of the Awami League have been sued for allegedly damaging the portraits of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, late president Ziaur Rahman, their son and Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP Tareque Rahman and BCC Mayor Majibur Rahman Sarwar MP at a club in the city on Wednesday night.

Police said BNP worker Md Tarek lodged the case with Sadar P o l i c e

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 23		6-26 pm
Aug 24	5-36 am	

Prayer Timings		
August 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-45	5-00
Zohr	12-15	1-20
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-35	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Allahr Dal activists grilled, give out important info

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Five young men, suspected to be activists of an organisation styled 'Allahr Dal' and now being interrogated on remand by police at Sunamganj, gave some important information yesterday.

They said the village unit head of

their party is called 'gram nayok', the thana unit head is 'thana nayok', the district unit chief is 'zila nayok' and the party chief is called 'taroka'.

Sources said the suspects declined to say if they had any link with any political party and claimed themselves as activists of the 'Allahr Dal'.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Wild elephants trample four to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A herd of marauding wild elephants trampled four persons to death and injured seven others at Shafipur village in Razasthali upazila of the district in the early hours yesterday.

The dead were identified as Abdur Rouf, 70, Ambia Begum, 40,

Zarina Begum, 27, and Saleha Begum, 3.

All the injured, identities of whom were not immediately available, were admitted to Rajasthali Upazila Health Complex, official sources said.

Sources said the herd of about

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8