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82 killed in Najaf car bomb blast



Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim

Top Shiite leader dies, 200 wounded

AFP, Najaf

A car bomb killed at least 82 people, including Iraq's leading Shiite politician, and wounded more than 200 yesterday outside one of Shiite Islam's holiest shrines in the central Iraqi city of Najaf.

Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim, head of the Iran-backed Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), was killed moments after he delivered his

weekly sermon at the Tomb of Ali in the holy city, 180 kilometres south of Baghdad, party officials said in both Baghdad and Tehran.

The bombing was the deadliest in the Middle East since October 23, 1983 when 241 US marines and 58 French soldiers deployed with a multinational force in Lebanon were killed in double truck bombings of their headquarters in Beirut.

Hakim, who spent some 20 years in exile in Iran before his return in

May, "met a martyr's fate along with his bodyguards," Mohsen al-Hakim, the son and political advisor of the ayatollah's brother, Abdel Aziz, told AFP in Tehran.

"Hakim died in a car bomb explosion Friday afternoon after prayers," confirmed SAIRI official Adel Abdel Mahdi in Baghdad about an attack that was also the deadliest in the world since last October's Bali bombing, which claimed more than 200 lives.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



A TV grab from Lebanon-based Al-Majar channel shows burning vehicles after an explosion in the Iraqi city of Najaf yesterday.

US soldier killed in convoy attack north of Baghdad

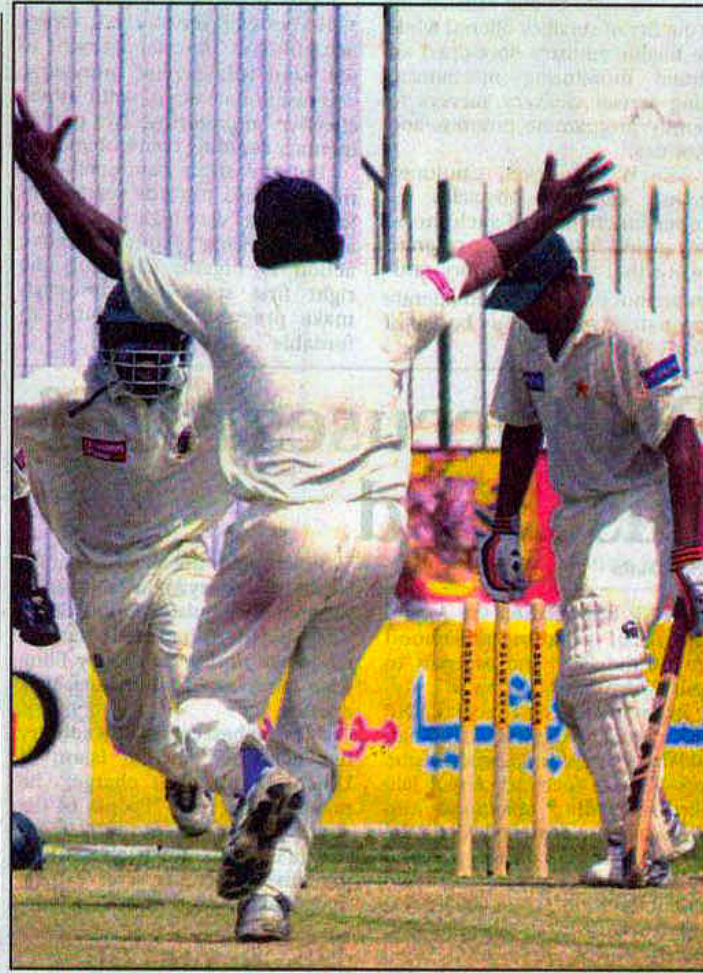
REUTERS, Baghdad

One US soldier was killed and three were wounded yesterday morning in an attack on a convoy north of the Iraqi capital, the US Army said.

Guerrillas fired rocket-propelled grenades on the six-vehicle convoy on a main road near the town of Baquba, about 40 miles north of Baghdad, Lieutenant Colonel William Adamson told Reuters.

The area is part of the so-called "Sunni Triangle," a bastion of anti-coalition sentiment which was the power base of deposed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Bangladesh spinner Mohammad Rafique is over the moon after clean bowling Pakistan's star batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq at Peshawar yesterday.

Kapali, Rafique steal the show

HASAN MASOOD from Peshawar

On an absorbing day of cricket, records tumbled and barriers were broken as Bangladesh further enhanced their reputation as a worthy Test playing nation at the Arbab Niaz Stadium in Peshawar. At close on day three, the tourists had a lead of 118 runs over Pakistan in the second Super Asia Test with six second innings wickets in hand.

The highlight of the third day's action was a fantastic hat-trick by leg-spinning all-rounder Alok Kapali, the first ever by a Bangladeshi.

Kapali, given a surprise bowl by captain Khaled Mahmud, began his destruction work immediately after tea. He had Shabbir Ahmed (8) caught at mid off with the fifth ball of his second over. The 19-year old then trapped Danish Kaneria leg



Alok Kapali

before with his next ball. His magic moment was completed in the first ball of his third over when he had Umar Gul lbw.

On an eventful day where for

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

4 suspected Imam killers arrested

Hartal in Khulna today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four suspected killers of Khulna city Awami League (AL) chief Monzurul Imam were arrested in Satkhira yesterday and the local units of the party are preparing to enforce a daylong hartal in the city today.

Our Satkhira correspondent adds: Police led by Officer-in-Charge Abdul Kader Baig raided different hotels in the town early yesterday morning and arrested the four at Simanta and

Park residential hotels.

The arrestees are Monir Hossain, 35, son of Idris Rahman of village Gadar Danga in Terokhada, Abdullah al-Mahbub, 20, son of Abdul Hamid of village Naksa in Koira, Sheikh Mohammad Ali, 35, son of Emdad Ali of Baniakhmar and Mahidul Sheikh, 22, son of Janab Ali of Samsul Haji village, Dhigholia, all of Khulna.

Some sources claimed that

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Killings widen AL-BNP gap

SHAKHAWAT LITON

A wave of political killings, claims the main opposition Awami League (AL), has pushed it to take a tough stand against the government, but the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) thinks there is still room

to discuss all issues in parliament.

The AL has started reshaping its anti-government strategies after the killing of its advisory committee member Monzurul Imam in Khulna and a city AL leader in Dhaka last week.

Already aggrieved at what the AL

dubs as the coalition government's poor governance and persecution of political opponents, the main opposition party found the killings too much to bear. "It's a question of our existence," a party leader said.

The AL and the BNP blamed each other for the killing of Imam.

But talking to The Daily Star senior leaders of both camps expressed their fear that the political scenario would change for the worse, if the killers were not brought to book.

The AL sources hinted at starting an anti-government movement after the Ramadan -- in December or early next year.

Resignation from the Jatiya Sangsad is once again being discussed in the party high command, as the AL lawmakers are angry at being deprived of their rights in parliament.

A working committee meeting of the party may be held in the first week of September to review the issues, sources said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Student flees captivity in Raozan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Abducted Patiya madrassah student Zakir Hossain, 20, yesterday fled the kidnappers' hideout in a deep forest in Raozan Upazila and returned to his sister's house in the city.

Zakir Hossain a 2nd year Cheherum (equivalent to Intermediate level) student of Jameya Al Islamia, Patiya, was abducted from in front of the madrassah on August 19.

On August 21, the kidnappers demanded a ransom of Tk. 10 lakh from the victim's family at Mogdale village under Moheshkhali Upazila

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

One shot dead by outlaws in Rupsha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

One was shot dead and two others were injured by the cadres of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) at Shirgati village under Rupsha upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Bulu Mia, 35, of village Kamargoan under Mollahat upazila of Bagerhat district. He was a matchmaker, police said.

The injured, identified as Ruhul Shaikh, 45, and Harun Dhali, 40, are armed cadres of the outlawed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

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