

Mortar attack on Iraqi market kills 8

Grenade charge kills US soldier

AFP, Baghdad

Eight Iraqi civilians were killed and 18 wounded Thursday night when a mortar bomb fell on a crowded square in Baqubah, northeast of Baghdad, the US military said yesterday.

"Eight civilians were killed and 18 wounded when a mortar round hit the al-Burtuqala market at approximately 9:08 pm (local time)," a US military spokeswoman told the news agency.

She said soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division rendered first aid and evacuated the wounded to a nearby hospital. There were no coalition casualties.

The bomb fell on the al-Burtuqala square, a teeming area in the center of Baqubah, 70 km from the capital, filled with shops and cafes.

US troops around Baqubah have come under frequent mortar attack, particularly near the airport, four km from the town that houses an American command post for the region.

Police Lieutenant Abbas Khodeir said authorities did not know who had fired the mortar. He had earlier reported seven Iraqi civilians were killed and 13 wounded.

In Baghdad, mortar fire which targeted a US military position in the capital wounded at least 10 Iraqis late Thursday, Iraqi police said.

"At least 10 Iraqis were injured in a mortar attack on a US army position which missed its target and hit houses in the Al-Rissalah district", a police officer told AFP yesterday.

He said the casualties had been taken to Al-Yarmuk hospital.

Reuters, adds: A rocket-propelled grenade attack killed a US soldier and wounded two others in the northern Iraqi oil hub of Kirkuk, the US military said yesterday.

A spokesman said the attack targeted the soldiers' vehicle at around 11 p.m. on Thursday. It brought to 80 the number of US soldiers killed in guerrilla attacks since Washington declared major combat over on May 1.

The United States blames dihard supporters of Saddam Hussein and foreign militants for the attacks.

The US Army said another American soldier had also died in a fire in an abandoned building near Saddam's hometown of Tikrit on Thursday evening. It said the incident was under investigation.

Lawyers to boycott courts on Oct 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Lawyers' Six Point Demand Implementation Committee yesterday announced a countrywide court boycott programme on October 1 to press home their demands.

At a press conference on the Supreme Court Bar Association premises yesterday, the lawyers also announced a grand rally on October 24, which will be attended by legal practitioners from all across the country.

The six-point demand includes separation of judiciary, transparency in appointment and promotion of justices and judges, cancellation of trade licence requirements for lawyers and repeal of the amendment of Civil Procedure Code (except section 115) and Rules and Order 1972 of Bangladesh Bar Council (BBC).

To realise these demands, a month-long programme was announced including countrywide demonstrations on October 8, a human chain programme on October 15, a token hunger strike on October 22, discussion meetings with different professional, social and political organisations, and distribution of posters and leaflets.

The lawyers termed as undemocratic the amendments of Civil Procedure Code and Rules and Order of bar council saying that members of the council were not consulted before these amendments were made.

BBC Vice-chairman Barrister Amir-ul-Islam accused the law minister of ignoring lawyers' opinion before bringing the amendment and held the minister accountable to the legal profession for the matter.

A 10-minute documentary show SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Bangladesh Teachers-Employees Unity Council brings out a procession as part of its National Convention in Dhaka yesterday for the implementation of the 17-point demand of the organisation.

PHOTO: STAR

Fingers point at Downing Street as Britain awaits Kelly findings

AFP, London

The finger of blame was pointing at Downing Street yesterday after the family of David Kelly struck out at Prime Minister Tony Blair's government for the tragic suicide of the weapons scientist.

Lord Brian Hutton, the veteran judge who heads the inquiry, has retired to write up his findings after hearing 74 witnesses over 22 days of hearings which laid bare the inner workings of Blair's government and the way it led a skeptical Britain into the US-led Iraq war.

He did so to the echoes of a fierce closing statement Thursday by the Kelly family's lawyer Jeremy Gompertz which left no doubt as to who his loved ones held responsible for his untimely death.

In particular, Gompertz singled out Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon for the slow-drip way in which the Ministry of Defence leaked Kelly's name as the source of a May 29 report on BBC radio hotly disputed by Downing Street.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Any innovative idea for telecoms welcome

Junior Chamber assured at 3E Summit

STAFF REPORTER

The government will allow infrastructure networking companies in the private sector to provide inter-connection and infrastructure facilities for new telecoms operators, said Syed Marghub Murshed, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC), yesterday.

"We welcome any innovative idea and endeavour that will help develop the telecoms sector," Murshed told the members of the Junior Chamber Bangladesh (JCB) at 3E Summit at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Speaking as the chief guest at a

discussion, "Keeping pace with telecoms development", Murshed said the BTRC is getting ready to introduce a hybrid exchange for circuit and packet switches to create a multioperator environment.

The BTRC will launch the hybrid exchange in Chittagong on an experimental basis with the financial assistance of the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and technical assistance of ITU (International Telecommunications Union), the BTRC chairman said.

"If it proves successful, we will replicate it for other cities," he said. The BTRC chairman admitted that the majority of the cellphone users could not get landline connectivity

because of inadequate interconnection.

Earlier, junior chamber members drew attention of the BTRC chairman to the need for immediate steps to legalise internet telephony. "The call centre business is being hindered because of the legal barrier facing the voice over internet phone (VoIP)," a chamber member said.

Murshed said the BTRC is working on legalising VoIP and allowing more licences to landline telephone and cellphone operators.

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) licences will be given on a zonal and nationwide basis and the fees will be kept to a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Move on to open madrassah graduates' door to govt jobs

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

A move is underway to put madrassah graduates and master's degree holders on an equal platform with the mainstream students to pave the way for them to get more government jobs, a top education ministry official said.

"We have put forward a proposal to the cabinet committee on education to consider Fazil and Kamil equal to bachelor and master's degrees," Education Secretary Mohammad Shahidul Alam told The Daily Star.

The committee is likely to decide on the issue at a meeting by mid-

October. Fazil and Kamil degree holders cannot compete for Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BCS) and other examinations for government jobs, as they are not considered graduate and master's degree holders.

"We want to bring them into the mainstream allowing them to sit for competitive examinations like BCS," he said.

Many students with Fazil and Kamil degrees involve themselves in activities related to religious propagation on setting up more religious schools and the thrust of the government plan is to let them

come into the competitive world. A curriculum similar to the mainstream education will be introduced to 15,000 madrassahs currently offering Fazil and Kamil degrees.

"Madrassah students have long been neglected despite having higher degrees. We need to bring all madrassahs under a university to set a curriculum and stamp higher degrees on their certificates," he said adding the Madrassah Education Board can now issue only higher secondary-equivalent certificates.

But the education ministry did

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Senegal supports Bangladesh's candidature for OIC secy-gen

BSS, New York

Senegal has extended support to Bangladesh's candidature for the post of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) secretary general.

The assurance was given when Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, who is leading a Bangladesh delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, called on Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade on Wednesday.

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, adviser to the prime minister on parliamentary affairs and Bangladesh candidate for the post of OIC secretary general, and Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, accompanied the foreign minister.

Ziaur Rahman Khan, MP, Khondaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, MP and Sadek Khan, members of the Bangladesh delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, were also present.

Infighting lands BCL in shambles

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Infighting, poor organisational activities, aloofness of senior leaders and regionalism have put Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student front of the main opposition Awami League (AL), in a shambles.

Chaos and confrontation are also rife in the party's Dhaka University (DU) unit, a key unit of the front in which hall-based rival factions have been sucked into an unceasing war of attrition, resulting in six major clashes on the campus in as many months.

Annoyed at the developments, some senior members of the BCL have virtually distanced themselves from organisational activities and are busy with their business or personal agenda.

Sources said there were at least five main factions in the BCL central committee and four in the DU unit.

BCL President Liaqat Sikder leads a faction, while General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu leads Dhaka metropolitan faction. Vice-President Rafiqul Islam Kotawal is the chief of Shariatpur-Madaripur group, Vice-President and former VP of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Ashfaul Azim Rubon heads the northern regional faction and vice-presidents Baloram Podder and Anisur Rahman, Joint Secretary Alak Banik and Organising Secretary Khalilur Rahman jointly lead the Barisal faction.

Rivalry between Liaqat and Babu crept in during the constitution of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Tripura CM for Indo-Bangla joint drive to root out insurgents

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Minister Manik Sarkar of the Indian State of Tripura has said he would welcome any joint move by Delhi and Dhaka to wipe out the insurgents of Tripura "hiding in Bangladesh territory."

In an interview with the Voice of America (VOA) broadcast Wednesday, the chief minister claimed there are 47 camps inside Bangladesh that accommodate the insurgents of his north-eastern State who are fighting for independence.

He, however, added: "I don't believe the Bangladesh government gives any support to these insurgents."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

DOWN TO EARTH

Vanishing splendour of posh city areas

ASM NURUNNABI

Residents of the city's posh residential areas like Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara have seen better times. Lately, some aspects of life in those areas have taken a turn for the worse due to rapid commercialisation of many properties.

Dhanmondi was once had the reputation of being an excellent residential area. But within a decade, it has lost almost all its residential characteristics as schools, clinics, fast food shops, banks, and other commercial establishments have cropped up all over the place.

The same fate has befallen the elite residential areas of Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara. Establishments like hotels, restaurants, banks, insurance companies, shopping complexes and other industrial and commercial offices have now become common features of these areas.

This was unimaginable even fifteen or twenty years ago. At that time, most of the plots there had single or two-storey houses, all spick and span with grassy lawns, verdant garden and a selection of beautiful trees. That scenario is now a thing of the past only to be looked back with nostalgia.

In the late sixties and early seventies, Gulshan and Banani were earmarked for residential purposes followed by Baridhara in the eighties where Rajuk allotted residential plots to affluent people of the society besides selected commercial zones. These affluent people included big industrialists and businessmen, high-ranking

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

