



British queen on al-Qaeda hit list?

AFP, London

Intelligence services have warned that Britain's Queen Elizabeth II could be the target of an Al-Qaeda terrorist attack during a visit to Nigeria later this year, the Sunday Telegraph reported.

A warning to the British government indicated that terrorists hoped to strike during a Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in December, the London-based paper said.

It added that Chris Mullin, the Foreign Office minister responsible for Africa, had told colleagues he was prepared to offer Nigeria the use of British forces to bolster security.

Ministers insisted that there was no suggestion that the queen would not go to the conference, which she is due to attend as head of the 54-nation Commonwealth, according to the Telegraph.

One unnamed minister told the paper: "We are worried about the security of the queen. She could be an al-Qaeda target. We will be talking to the Nigerians about their security plans and we are prepared to offer our security forces if necessary."

Al-Qaeda is the terror network headed by Osama bin Laden and blamed for the September 11, 2001, hijack plane attacks on New York and Washington.

2 women commit 'suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young housewife and a teenage girl apparently committed suicide in Pallabi and Kafur yesterday.

Police said Anu, a 22-year-old garment worker, jumped from the rooftop of the six-story Recent Garments building at Mollah Market in Pallabi at around 12:30pm. Anu was the wife of rickshaw-puller Anwar Hossain of 1/1, Mominer Basti in Pallabi.

Police said Anu might have committed suicide following a family quarrel. Her husband has been absconding since her suicide.

In the other incident, Lucky, 15, hanged herself with her scarf from the ceiling of their tin-shed house at CB, 223, Old Kachukhet in Kafur at 2:00pm.

A neighbour, Aleya Begum, took her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. No reason has been given for the apparent suicide.

Two separate unnatural death cases have been filed.

World peace

FROM PAGE 1 Sonargaon Hotel where the meeting was held.

About the agenda, Bob said, "It includes, among other things, governance in CPA member countries, role of MPs, rights of women MPs, orientation for new members, holding of seminars and discussions on current world affairs."

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, who attended the meeting, told reporters that he was hopeful of holding a very successful conference.

Sircar said the conference would focus on world peace and security.

The CPA executive committee will also meet at the same venue today to further discuss the conference agenda.

Fee exemption for tiny nations

Observers from small countries with populations between 1,200 and 4 lakh have been exempted from paying US\$ 3,000 in registration and hotel fees to attend the CPA conference.

However, non-invitee observers from Nigeria, not a small country by the CPA definition, continued to arrive in Dhaka and most of them pleaded for fee exemption.

Of the 15 Nigerians who arrived in Dhaka until yesterday from two state assemblies, two were invited delegates and the rest observers.

Refusing to pay the fees, four of the observers left Dhaka yesterday, two will return home today and the rest the next day.

The fee exemption facilities will be enjoyed by observers from as many as 40 small countries under the CPA grouping.

President of the 49th CPA conference Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar said the exemption proposal came from the CPA headquarters yesterday.

CPA conference

FROM PAGE 1

Information Department.

The organisers could not properly handle the accommodation of foreign observers, particularly those who arrived ahead of schedule and provide food for unspecified people on short notices.

Many of the 1,600 expected invitees to the official launch were yet to get invitation cards until last night. Most press cards for journalists were issued late and with misspelled names and designations.

The CPA Small Countries' Conference opened at Sheraton Hotel half an hour behind schedule.

When Sircar okayed the beginning of the meet with recitation from the holy Quran, there was no designated person to recite.

The officials hurried a staff of the parliament secretariat onto the dais, but there was none to translate the Arabic verses into English for the understanding of foreign delegates.

Various figures were given by different officials on the number of countries participating in the Small Countries' Conference, creating a haze of confusion.

During inauguration, Sircar put the numbers of countries and delegates at 31 and 62, while the public relations department of the Jatiya Sangsad secretariat gave the figures of 28 and 61. The conference chairman said 22 countries and 43 delegates participated in the conference before the CPA headquarters' officials stepped into the scene to confirm the participation of 39 delegates and five officials representing 20 countries.

On the problems of gathering information, Sircar said: "We'll not give any information officially, there'll be no briefing. Newsmen have to gather information on their own. You can get information from CPA headquarters officials."

As for non-publication of the conference bulletin, he advised journalists to contact the media sub-committee of

the conference headed by BNP lawmaker Mahbubur Rahman.

He also advised the press to inquire about the lack of coordination from Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui.

On difficulties faced by delegates and observers, the speaker said three whips and six MPs and many volunteers were doing everything possible to make the guests comfortable.

On serving food on short notices, Sircar said it was nothing peculiar for an international conference.

Certain level of mismanagement is common for any international conference, he said, adding programme rescheduling was also there in the UN conferences.

CPA Executive Committee Chairman Bob Speller, however, did not make any comment on mismanagement.

The CPA Desk, set up at Sheraton Hotel, was also reluctant to even give the basic information, terming those 'confidential'.

Meanwhile, taking their time off the conference, many delegates along with their spouses went round the tourist spots in Dhaka.

About 300 delegates reached Dhaka until yesterday and at least 197 more are expected to come today. According to officials, 535 delegates and observers from national and regional parliaments of 48 countries are due to join the conference.

Today's schedule includes holding of CPA executive committee meeting, Small Countries' Conference, steering committee meeting of Commonwealth women parliamentarians and a dinner in honour of women parliamentarians and their spouses to be hosted by CWP Chairperson and Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque.

Hasina sticks to her 'no'

FROM PAGE 1

officials briefed Sheikh Hasina about the importance of the conference and requested her to join any event of her choosing.

"The leader of the opposition told CPA Chairman Bob Speller and Secretary General Denis Marshall that under the prevailing circumstances her party lawmakers had no way to join the CPA programmes," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told reporters.

Jalil said, "Sheikh Hasina politely turned down the request of the CPA officials to join any of the programmes and blamed the government's arrogant attitude for her party's decision".

CPA Treasurer Dr John Marek, Director (finance) Mahabub Alam and Speaker of West Bengal (India) Assembly Hashim Abdul Halim were also present at the meeting.

"The AL chief explained the reasons behind boycotting the conference. It was not an agreeable decision to the party," Jalil said. "But the government forced us to take the decision by not including the main opposition in the preparatory stage of the conference."

"As a self-respecting party, the AL cannot join the conference just to honour the last-minute invitation by the government, which ignored us from the very beginning," he said. "The government didn't attach any impor-

tance to the main opposition before the international pressure began to tell."

Replying to a query on the government's assurance to meet all the demands of the opposition, the AL leader said, "We didn't demand anything. We only requested the speaker to uphold the constitutional rights of the opposition lawmakers, but he failed."

Abdul Jalil said the government has to shoulder the responsibility if the country's image is blurred due to the opposition's boycotting the conference. "It's not our responsibility only, the government has to share it," he said.

Deputy Opposition leader Advocate Abdul Hamid said they told the CPA officials that the government would politicise the matter if the AL joined any of the events.

He said the AL had a plan to meet with the CPA delegates in a lunch or dinner. "But the government scheduled the programmes for the visiting lawmakers in such a way that it left no space for us," he added.

On mismanagement of the opening day of the CPA conference, Abdul Jalil said, "We cannot share the government's failure."

AL presidium member Abdus Samad Azad and press adviser to the party chief Jawadul Karim were also present at the meeting.

BSF patrol boat rams trawler of Hindu devotees

30 missing, 50 swim ashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

At least 30 people went missing and two others were seriously injured when a trawler capsized after being hit by a patrol boat of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in river Ichhamati near Sreepur, Debhata last night.

The trawler was packed with 80 Bangladeshis who went to the river for immersion of image of the god-dess Durga.

Fifty of them managed to swim ashore.

Prahlad Gosh, 15, and Sanjay Biswas, 23, were injured in the mishap and admitted to Shakhipur Hospital.

Sources said several Bangladeshis boats gathered for the immersion ceremony on the river, which, for the most part, is controlled by the BSF.

Muggers shoot man, robs Tk 50,000

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers shot a man and robbed him of Tk 50,000 at Mirpur last night.

Royal Khan, 30, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with bullet wounds in the belly.

Khan was on his way home when a gang of four muggers stopped him near Mirpur section 2 and shot him in the belly when he refused to hand them his cash and valuables, hospital sources quoted the victim as saying.

The muggers decamped with the money and the victim's mobile phone.

The duty officer at Mirpur Police Station said he was not aware of the incident.



PHOTO: AFP

A Palestinian woman makes a gesture of anguish in front of suicide bomber Hanadi Tayssir Jaradat's demolished house at Jenin, West Bank, after Israeli troops dynamited the Jaradat family home into rubble early yesterday morning.

Dhaka might send troops

FROM PAGE 1

had a meeting with Powell on the sidelines of the UNGA when the question was again raised.

Morshed Khan said Bangladesh is a democracy where people's wish is reflected in any government decision.

He opined that many other countries along with Bangladesh would be willing to send troops if the UN was allowed to play a central role in Iraq and made an appeal to its member states.

"We don't send troops to fight for or against any side. We send troops under the blue helmet, under the UN. We send troops on multilateral arrangement, not bilaterally," he told a questioner.

Khan said the question of establishing peace in Iraq and Palestine came up during his meeting with Powell.

Apart from the Middle East, they also discussed bilateral matters. On the question of gas export, he said, "We did not discuss such micro issues."

Powell told him he had fruitful talks with Bangladeshi leaders during his Dhaka visit and praised Bangladesh's important role in establishing world peace.

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan also had a meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan where they discussed the Middle East, Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan.

Khan said peace in the Middle East would remain a mirage until the root cause of conflicts there, particularly in Palestine, could be addressed.

Annan praised Bangladesh's efforts for world peace.

The foreign minister led the Bangladesh delegation at the UNGA and addressed the plenary

on September 29.

On the sidelines of the UNGA, he had nearly 30 bilateral meetings with his counterparts, and heads of state and government, discussing bilateral and international issues.

He also attended several multilateral meetings, including Commonwealth ministerial and CMAG meetings, Nam ministerial meeting, Nam ministerial committee meeting on Palestine, Saarc-Asean dialogue and OIC Foreign Ministers' Annual Coordination meeting.

During his 10-day visit to New York, Morshed Khan met with Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of the 58th UNGA Julian Robert Hunte and Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon.

About Bangladesh's candidature for the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) secretary general, Morshed said he received encouraging response from his counterparts from other Muslim countries during meetings with them in New York.

He hosted a luncheon in honour of the OIC foreign ministers when he introduced Bangladesh's candidate, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, advisor to the prime minister on parliamentary affairs, who is vying for the post of chief executive of the OIC.

"We received encouraging response from them. They assured us of their cooperation since there is no other candidate yet for the post," Khan said.

Morshed also expressed his optimism about securing Bangladesh's membership in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), election to which will be held on October 16.

Asked if he raised India's

planned water-linking project during his speech in the UNGA session on September 29, Khan said he did not mention any specific issue but made a general observation on the use of natural resources, including freshwater, to avert ecological imbalance.

Bangladesh wants that both upper and lower riparian countries should have easy and legitimate share of natural resources, particularly water, as per international law, he said.

Khan had a meeting with Indian Foreign Minister Yaswant Sinha on the sidelines of the UNGA where they discussed the outcome of JEC (Joint Economic Council) and JRC (Joint Rivers Commission) meetings and inauguration of Dhaka-Agartala bus service.

He said any problem between the two neighbours could be resolved through discussion.

About the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit scheduled to be held in Pakistan next January, the foreign minister said he had bilateral meetings with leaders of India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka where he hoped that the Saarc process should not be impeded due to bilateral conflicts.

"We hoped that the Saarc summit will be held on schedule," he told a questioner.

About nuclear tensions between India and Pakistan as well as in the Korean peninsula, he said any such problems threatening to break peace should be resolved through discussion.

Foreign Secretary Shamser Mobin Chowdhury and senior foreign ministry officials were present at the airport.

AL activist shot dead in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another Awami League (AL) activist was gunned down at Bagmara under Rupsha upazila here Saturday night, the third such murder of AL men in Khulna in about a week's time.

Abu Taher, 45, an AL activist and owner of a fish farm, was shot dead by four men in front of Bagmara Primary School under Rupsha Police Station at around 10:30pm, eyewitnesses said.

Rupsha Police said they caught Sagor, 25, one of the alleged killers and an activist of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), after shooting him in the leg during a chase. Ten gun cartridges were recovered from his possession.

Eyewitnesses said Sagor was carrying a sown-off rifle when police shot him and threw his weapon into the river before his arrest.

Police have reportedly launched a manhunt for the other killers and picked up six suspects during a nightlong operation. Additional police have been deployed at areas of Rupsha upazila that are known to have hideouts of PBCP and other outlawed outfits.

Taher's murder is suspected to be a sequel to enmity with a Union Parishad (UP) member, one of his partners in the fish farm, said Khulna superintendent of police yesterday without naming the UP member.

No case was filed till writing of this report yesterday.

Earlier on Thursday night, unidentified assailants gunned down AL activist Mushfiqur Rahman Mukul 26, near the Sub Registrar's office under Daulatpur Police Station in Khulna City.

AL activist Tushar Hasan Lenin, 30, was shot dead at Ramnagar under Rupsha upazila on the night of September 26.

In the preceding month or so, City AL president advocate Manzurul Imam, advocate Bijon Bihari Mondol, their rickshawpuller Shahid and ward AL leader Kamrul Hasan Kutu were also killed.

Israel strikes in Syria

FROM PAGE 1

Israeli warplanes hit a Syrian radar position in Lebanon in 2001 and targets just inside Syria in the 1982 Lebanon war, but Sunday's raid was said to be the deepest inside Syria for three decades.

"It was a very clear, focused message...to (Syria) to start dismantling the terror organisations that operate from its territory," said Raanan Gissin, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Islamic Jihad issued a statement denying it had any training camps in Syria. The group and other Palestinian militant factions have spearheaded a three-year-old uprising for statehood.

The surprise Israeli move came amid speculation Israel would target Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, whom it has threatened to exile.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said on Sunday Arafat's expulsion would not serve the cause of peace and accused Israel of provoking Palestinians to commit acts of violence.

Israeli government sources said no move against Arafat was imminent. The United States opposes exiling Arafat, saying he would only win world sympathy.

Faced with the impasse, Sharon's fighting image at home could receive a boost from the show of strength against Syria, one of Israel's most bitter foes, as the Jewish state headed into the Yom Kippur fast day, a time of national reflection.

ADP

FROM PAGE 12

local resources deserves to be appreciated.

The revised budget sought Tk 1,501 crore in bank loans. But ultimately the government did not take any bank loan for the ADP.

The government's net loan stood at Tk 20,164 crore in June 2002 and it reduced by Tk 1,101 crore to Tk 19,062 crore in June 2003.

The revised revenue budget was set at Tk 25,307 crore, but at the end of the year, only about Tk 24,500 crore was spent.

On the flip side, the government's borrowing from savings instruments increased during last fiscal. Against an envisaged Tk 3,522 crore, the net collection from sales of such instruments rose to Tk 4,306 crore.

Blair

FROM PAGE 12

many times before."

In further extracts from the book, Point of Departure, Cook says he spoke to Scarlett on February 20, a month before hostilities began.

After receiving a detailed briefing on the latest intelligence on Saddam's weapons capabilities, he concluded that the Iraqi dictator "probably does not have weapons of mass destruction in the sense of weapons that could be used against large-scale civilian targets".

In a meeting on March 5, he told Blair he believed Iraq's WMD capability was limited to battlefield chemical munitions which could be used against British troops, but could not otherwise threaten British interests.

When he asked whether Blair was not troubled by the prospect of the weapons being used against British troops, he said he received the reply: "Yes, but all the effort he has had to put into concealment makes it difficult for him to assemble them quickly for use."

Cook said he was "deeply troubled" by the prime minister's response.

"Tony made no attempt to pretend that what Hans Blix might report would make any difference to the countdown to invasion," he said.

Illegal toll collection

FROM PAGE 1

extortionists themselves, were operating, said the aggrieved owners.

And one of them said they would continue the strike today if there were no acceptable solution.

"We have filed a complaint accusing 12 persons including Akhter, Razzaq, Montu, Khorshed and Hiru with Demra Police Station, and the officer-in-charge (OC) called us yesterday evening to settle the matter," he added.

Besides, buses on route-8 plying between Demra-Shanir Akhra-Shyampur and Gabtoli pay tolls to local extortionists at different points.

We have to pay Tk 30 at Ranimahal (Demra) and Tk 20 at Jatrabari every day, said a conductor of a bus of the Ranimahal-Gabtoli route.

The same is true about the human haulers and other buses plying from the area to Mirpur, Mohammadpur and others places in the city, the conductor said.

Former MP Akhteruzzaman, managing director of Rora Enterprises, one of the private firms in charge of management of Sayedabad and Mahakhal terminals, said he informed Demra police of the problem created by extortionists.

He said the private operators are going to introduce a digital system of toll collection (through card-

The army said the base in Syria was funded by Iran and used to train Palestinian militants, mostly from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, in bomb-making and guerrilla fighting.

"We will not tolerate the continuation of this axis of terror between Tehran, Damascus and Gaza to continue to operate and kill innocent men, women and children," Gissin told CNN.

A senior Israeli military official declined comment when asked any attack on Iran was being contemplated. The official said al Qaeda operatives had also trained in the camp but gave no details and added it was unclear if any were at the facility.

In August, Israeli jets buzzed Assad's holiday palace in an overflight widely seen as a warning to rein in militants.

Hours after the Haifa bombing, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at what the army said was a Hamas weapons depot in the Gaza Strip. No one was hurt. Israeli forces also blocked the Gaza Strip's main highways to Palestinian traffic.

Islamic Jihad named the suicide bomber as Hanadi Tayseer Jaradat, a 29-year-old lawyer from the West Bank city of Jenin whom an Israeli newspaper dubbed "the devil's advocate".

Islamic Jihad and relatives said she was avenging Israel's killing of her brother and cousin, Islamic Jihad members.

Phensidyl peddlers kill accomplice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Phensidyl peddlers fatally injured fellow member, bagged up the body and then dumped it in lowland near the embankment in Mohammadpur on October 3.

The bloated body of Mohammad Ali, 25, cashier of the gang and a rickshaw-puller, was recovered from water near the Kaderabad Housing at 8:30am yesterday.

The killers beat him up severely, cut off his tongue and nose and smashed his teeth and knees, said police. Ali's wife Minora Begum identified the body from the spot.

"Badal, Badshah, Dadon and Taju called him (Ali) out of our house (82, Katashur) at 4:00pm on October 3," said Minora Begum. "But I could not think then that they were calling him out to murder him."

Police, who said Ali might have been killed for dispute over distribution of money, could not arrest any of the four after Minora filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station.

Meanwhile, police yesterday identified the slaughtered young man near Cantonment Railway Station on Saturday evening as Ershad, 24.

Son of Ashraf Ali of the Cantonment slum, Ershad was going to his workplace with his brother-in-law Monjur when some muggers waylaid them.

"A gang of 7-8 snatchers took away Tk 47, that was all Ershad had," said victim's younger brother 'Ful' Babu, quoting Monjur.

When the muggers were going away, Ershad shouted at them, telling that he could recognise them well. They (muggers) then rushed back and took both Ershad and Monjur to a nearby bush, Babu said.

While the muggers were busy slaughtering Ershad with a sharp knife, Monjur managed to free himself and ran for life.

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