

US tank attacked, 2 soldiers die in Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

The US post-war combat death toll in Iraq climbed past the number of soldiers killed during the invasion when the US military said yesterday it had lost two more dead in a roadside bomb north of Baghdad.

Their deaths brought to 116 the number of US troops killed in hostilities since US President Bush declared major combat over on May 1, surpassing the 115 killed in the war launched on March 20 to topple Saddam Hussein.

The sombre statistic -- no reliable figures are available for the many more Iraqis killed in the conflict -- underlines the scale of the resistance that US forces have stirred since they burst into Iraq more than seven months ago.

A spokesman for the US Army's

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Bush still defiant over Iraq attacks

REUTERS, Washington

Struggling to maintain public support for his Iraq policy, President Bush vowed on Tuesday US forces would not leave Iraq and said he never misled Americans about the difficulties of occupying the country.

During a subdued Rose Garden news conference, Bush tempered his oft-stated refrain that major progress is being made in Iraq nearly six months after standing on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln and declaring major combat operations over.

"Iraq is dangerous, and it's dangerous because terrorists want us to leave, and we're not leaving," he said.

The president sought to drive home a "stay the course" message a day after suicide bombers drove carloads of explosives into five buildings around Baghdad, killing 35 people and wounding 230 in the bloodiest day since President Saddam Hussein was ousted in April.

The extent of the coordinated attacks stunned the White House as Bush strove to maintain Americans' backing for keeping US forces in Iraq to create conditions for a democratic government and search for alleged weapons of mass destruction that the war was fought over and that have not been found.

Reflecting some sensitivity, Bush said it was not White House staff

who put up a "Mission Accomplished" banner on the Abraham Lincoln during his May 1 appearance, adding it was the aircraft carrier's staff who hung the sign because the ship itself was concluding a long overseas mission.

"My statement was a clear statement, basically recognizing that this phase of the war for Iraq was over, and there was a lot of dangerous work," he said.

Bush, under fire from Democratic presidential candidates who said he needs to put forward a plan to stabilize Iraq, said the strategy for dealing with attacks was to increase security around potential

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Ctg-Riyadh direct Biman flight starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chittagong-Riyadh direct Biman flight started yesterday.

The new flight with 158 passengers aboard landed at Shah Amanat International Airport at 8:55am, 10 minutes ahead of scheduled time.

State minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Md. Nasiruddin received the passengers at the airport.

From now on, the Biman flight will be operating once a week. It will depart Chittagong airport half an hour after its arrival here at 9:05am on every Wednesday, Biman sources said.

Internal strife stalls JCD politics at DU

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Dhaka University (DU) has been dogged by internal feud for the best part of the year leaving campus politics in a shambles for the ruling BNP's student wing.

Ever since formation of new committees early this year, the DU residential halls have become hotbeds of political infighting within the JCD leading to at least 10 inter-

necine clashes on the campus, sources said.

Zahurul Haque Hall, Sir AF Rahman Hall, Mohsin Hall, Surya Sen Hall, Ziaur Rahman Hall and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall are most disreputable among residential halls where such infighting is prevalent.

The situation has forced party authorities to expel as many as 53 members this year for anti-party

activities in an effort to ward off organisational disorder. But their continued preoccupation with resolving intra-party strife has stalled normal political activities of the beleaguered student body.

The JCD leadership, grappling to reconcile the feuding factions, has since reinstated some expelled party members, but 32 workers and

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PHOTO: STAR

Three trucks driving abreast block the road at the Benapole border checkpoint with India Tuesday afternoon, as the inadequate police presence fails to bring order to traffic.

Coastguards hunt for defaulting foreign vessel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Coastguards yesterday started a search for a foreign cargo vessel as it left the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port without clearing port dues and other charges.

MV Filma, an Indonesian flag-carrier ship owned by Wilmer International, a company based in Singapore, arrived at the outer

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Pakistan hails Indian offer, wants talks

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday welcomed proposals made last week by India to revive the flagging peace process, but expressed regret at New Delhi's rejection of Islamabad's offer of talks.

Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar told a news briefing Pakistan had accepted Indian proposals to hold the next round of technical talks on resuming air links between the nuclear-armed neighbours on December 1-2.

He also called for diplomatic missions in both countries to be returned to full strength.

"We have carefully studied the Indian proposals and have decided to respond positively to the latest Indian proposals in the hope that the latest reciprocal steps taken by both countries would lead to the resumption of a meaningful dialogue," he said.

"We hope that India also responds positively to some of the proposals made by us recently to

de-escalate the situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir," Khokhar said, adding that a reduction in Indian "repression" there was vital to the peace process.

He described Kashmir as the "cancer" and "poison" between the rivals, who have fought two of their three wars over the disputed territory and came close to a fourth conflict in 2002 before relations gradually began to thaw earlier this year.

Last week India moved to get the stalled peace process moving again, although some of its proposals were largely symbolic.

Khokhar said Pakistan had proposed to the Indians to hold technical talks on the resumption of rail links, because most people used to travel by a train called the "Samjhota (Understanding) Express" before links were severed last year.

"We believe that the immediate resumption of Samjhota Express

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JS body to release list of Janatar Mancha bureaucrats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on the establishment ministry has decided to make public a list of officials involved with the political platform styled Janatar Mancha in 1996 and recommend punitive action against them.

The committee at a meeting yesterday asked the ministry to place at its next meeting a list of officials who violating service rules joined the Janatar Mancha, meeting sources said.

Held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the meeting also asked the ministry to prepare the list in the light of reports of the Muyeet committee, Nurrunnabi committee and Shamsul Haque committee on administrative reforms.

"It will be a scandal in public administration if we allow the officials, who violated service rules, to go unpunished. So, we cannot permit it," Chairman of the committee Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul told The Daily Star.

Bakul pointed out as per service rules no government officials can

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PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's mobile court prowls the Gulistan area yesterday, as joint forces of police and Bangladesh Rifles continue their drive against crimes in the capital.

Three to walk the gallows for Lalbagh double murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced three persons to death for double murder in Lalbagh.

The convicts are Mohammad Badiul, Mohammad Saidul and Mohammad Adel.

Saidul and Adel were present in the court yesterday, while Badiul is absconding.

The convicts can file an appeal with the higher court against the judgement within seven days from the date of its delivery.

Judge Abu Hanif of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3, Dhaka Division, delivered the verdict at a crowded courtroom.

The prosecution story in brief is that Imon and Iran, workers at a shoe factory at 90, Abdul Aziz Lane in the city's Lalbagh area, were sleeping after work on April 8 last year. At about 5:00 in the morning, Badiul, Saidul and Adel entered the factory, beat up the victims, tied their hands and legs, poured petrol on them and set them afire. They left the place after locking the factory door.

The victims were rescued in critical condition and rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where they succumbed to their injuries on April 10, 2002, the FIR alleged.

Iran gave a dying declaration to a magistrate saying that Lalbagh police had arrested Shafiq, a known criminal of Lalbagh area, 10 days before the incident took place. Shafiq thought Iran and his colleagues assisted police in the arrest. The attack might have been a sequel to the incident, Iran told the magistrate.

Anwar Hossain, Imon's brother, filed the murder case with Lalbagh Police Station, accusing Badiul, Saidul and Adel, on April 10, 2002.

Ministry tags extortion to jam at Kanchpur

Altaf vows two mobile courts at trouble spot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A meeting on law and order yesterday cited obstruction of vehicles by extortionists for illegal toll collection as the reason for intolerable traffic jam near the Kanchpur Bridge.

"Two more mobile courts will be posted in and around Kanchpur Bridge and Narayanganj Link Road tomorrow (Thursday) to head off the

problem," said Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury, who chaired the meeting of the law and order review committee at the home ministry.

"We are determined to improve the situation during Ramadan," he added.

The meeting that came on the second day of a special drive against traffic infractions addressed

the capital's traffic jam situation at length and also discussed their causes and remedies.

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar, Home Secretary Omar Farooq, Inspector General of Police Shahudul Haque, BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) chief Major General Jahangir Alam and

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Earth buffeted by solar flare

BBC ONLINE

A gas cloud from one of the largest flares ever seen on the Sun has reached the Earth yesterday causing a magnetic storm that erupted and then faded quickly.

The disruption to the Earth's magnetic field was described as very severe.

Aurora -- northern lights -- caused by the charged particles from the Sun have been seen at night all over the globe.

The Sun is undergoing a surge of activity and currently has several large sunspot groups on its surface. More flares and disruption is expected.

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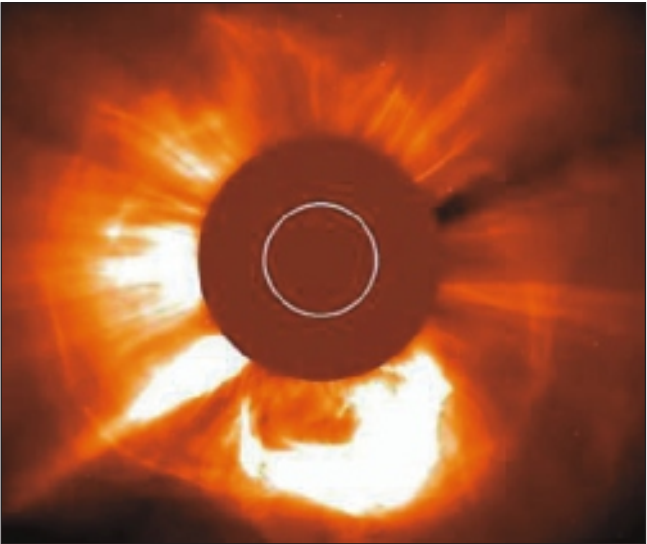


PHOTO: REUTERS

Clouds of charged particles emitted from the sun could affect satellites, power grids and pipelines when they reached the Earth yesterday.

JCD rivals clash on DU, 12 hurt

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 leaders and workers of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and two policemen were injured, in clashes between two rival factions of Shahidullah Hall JCD unit on Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday.

Those injured seriously are Zakaria Al Mamun, general secretary of the JCD hall unit, Hasanuzzman Babu, sports secretary of the unit and JCD workers Molla Jalaluddin Arif and Shahdat Hossain Apu and police constable Pran Krishna Odhikari. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The other injured including JCD workers Awal, Jasim, Wahab and Sajal and police sub-inspector (SI) Mashiur Rahman were given first aid.

The clashes took place between supporters of the two factions -- one led by JCD hall unit Acting President Amjad Hossain Jewel and the other by its General Secretary Zakaria -- over occupation of seats at the hall.

JCD sources said the clashes followed feuds over seats at the extension of the hall by supporters of the two factions. The two sides sat Tuesday night to resolve the problem but the move failed due to assault on two workers of Amjad-led faction at the hall.

The other faction then beat up a member of the DU unit committee of the JCD and resident of the hall when he tried to help resolve the dispute.

Later, a group of about 25 leaders and workers led by JCD central leader Sayeed Iqbal Tito and DU

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