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Chopper downed in Iraq, 15 GIs killed

AGENCIES, Fallujah

At least 15 American soldiers were killed and 21 wounded after a US helicopter was shot down in Fallujah in the bloodiest single strike on US-led forces since they invaded Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein.

The crippled Chinook helicopter came down in farmland at 9:00am (1:00am EST) near the village of Baisa, south of Falluja, a fiercely anti-U.S. town 30 miles west of the capital.

US helicopters circled above the smoking wreckage. Other helicopters and US Humvee vehicles were parked nearby.

US Army spokesman Colonel William Darley told reporters that the cause of the crash was under investigation.

Witnesses said the helicopter, carrying troops on a rest and recreation break, had been shot down by Saddam remnants.

Some Iraqis were jubilant. "The Americans are pigs. We will hold a celebration because this helicopter went down -- a big celebration," said wheat farmer Saadoun Jaralla near the crash site. "The Americans are enemies of mankind."

It was the third time a US helicopter was brought down since US President George W Bush declared major combat over in Iraq on May 1. The Americans invaded in March.

"Clearly it is a tragic day for Americans," Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told ABC television. "In a long hard war we are going to have tragic days."

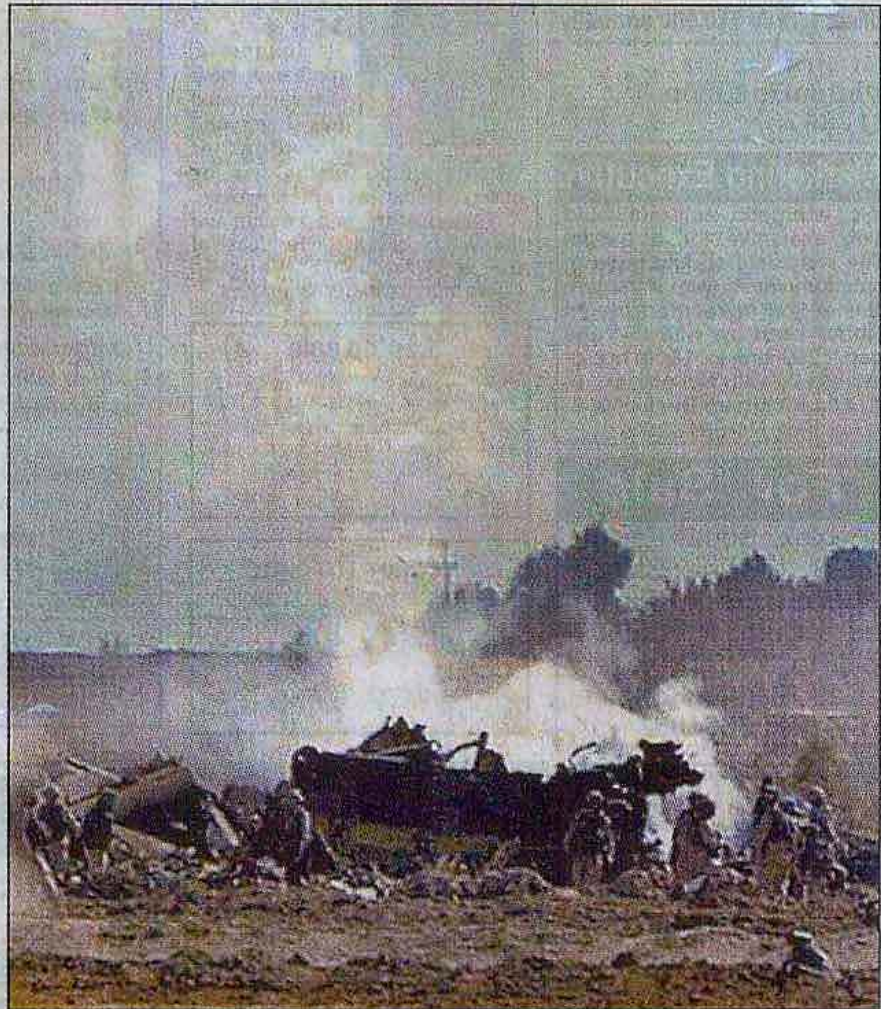
But he said the United States would not be deterred and would win the war in Iraq.

Bush vowed on Saturday to stand firm and said leaving Iraq prematurely would strengthen the "terrorists" he said were to blame for recent deadly suicide attacks.

A U.S. spokesman said two Chinooks had been heading for Baghdad airport when one was "shot down by an unknown weapon."

A witness in Falluja, Dawoud Suleiman, said: "There were two American helicopters. They fired a missile at one and missed, and then they hit the other, which crashed and caught fire."

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US soldiers inspect the site where a Chinook Helicopter was shot down yesterday killing 15 and wounding 21 of their colleagues, outside the Iraqi town Fallujah, 50km west of Baghdad.

Price situation remains unchanged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of some essentials at city's kitchen markets fell slightly yesterday, but the prices in general remained more or less as of Saturday.

At Karwan Bazaar kitchen market, brinjal was selling at Tk 18 per kilo down from Tk 20, Potato Tk 12 from Tk 13, ginger Tk 24 from Tk 26, Indian garlic Tk 24 from Tk 26, Indian onion Tk 20 from Tk 22 and long beans (barbati) Tk 18 from Tk 20.

Prices of per kilo cucumber remained stable at Tk 25, local onion Tk 26, local garlic Tk 32, beans Tk 60, tomato Tk 40, dried chilli Tk 85, green chilli Tk 26-28, turmeric Tk 75, and soybean oil at Tk 48-52 a litre.

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INVOLVEMENT IN CRIMES

Intelligence agencies asked to watch cops

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM and SHARIFUL ISLAM

The home ministry has instructed inter-departmental intelligence agencies to monitor police activities in Dhaka and other major cities in the wake of their increasing involvement in extortion and other crimes.

"We have asked the inspector general of police (IGP) to help the intelligence agencies monitor police activities and pinpoint their criminal involvement," a top official of

the ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

The ministry also ordered a probe into all criminal incidents involving police and action against the guilty, the official said seeking anonymity.

The officers-in-charge (OCs) and other high officials have been asked to keep a close watch on their forces following the deaths of three people in police custody in Khilgaon and Gulshan and mugging of Tk2 lakh by four policemen of Khilgaon Police

Station recently.

In recent times, some law enforcers have been found involved in blackmailing. They frame innocent people and force them to pay money to avoid jail or police torture.

In Dhaka Metropolitan area, 20 written complaints were lodged against policemen in the last one year, but no action was taken against anyone.

During the same period, 2,845 complaints against police were

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Jamal's family meets PM tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The wife and two children of abducted Chittagong businessman Jamaluddin Ahmed Chowdhury have been given an appointment with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at 2:00pm tomorrow.

Jamal's wife Nazma Chowdhury was informed about the appointment yesterday evening. Earlier in the morning, she had returned home to Chittagong after failing to meet the PM.

On Saturday, Nazma travelled to Dhaka and met Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, requesting him to arrange an appointment for her with Khaleda so that she could tell her the names of people she

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Dhaka, Colombo to sign FTA next year

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka yesterday agreed to ink a free trade agreement (FTA) next year to be effective from the day of signing.

"I see no major difficulty in the negotiation. We are hopeful that the FTA will come into force next year," Manel de Silva, joint secretary and director general of the Department of Commerce of Sri Lanka, told newsmen at the conclusion of the two-day talks in Dhaka.

The joint secretary level talks began in Dhaka Saturday. Elias Ahmed, leader of a six-member Bangladesh team, and his Sri Lankan counterpart de Silva led their sides to the meeting at the

Ministry of Commerce.

"I hope it will take a year to complete the negotiation and sign the deal," said Elias after the meeting.

The FTA is now a global phenomenon and 80 percent of the global trade is done on bilateral basis, he mentioned.

"We have no option but to remain in the mainstream. If we fail to adjust to the latest development, we will run the risk of being side-tracked."

He said the rules of origin for the FTA would be as simple as possible and both countries are yet to prepare a negative list of products.

Under the rules of origin, two countries decide what should be the

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Mob beats up 5 muggers in Khilgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob yesterday beat up five alleged snatchers including a CNG autorickshaw driver at Mallbagh in Khilgaon, leaving all seriously injured.

Four of the five snatchers encircled a woman passenger's rickshaw at Mallbagh Chowdhurypara and demanded her valuables at dagger's point at around 1:30pm.

When she cried out for help, locals chased and caught the snatchers along with the driver of the autorickshaw.

Police rushed to the spot and rescued alleged snatchers Hridoy, Fazlu, Ameer Minhazur Rahman, Minhaz and driver Anwar Hossain, whose vehicle was used in the crime.

They are undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

JAIL KILLING DAY TODAY

War heroes denied justice 28 yrs after death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation pays homage to four independence war heroes today, marking their 28th death anniversary amid frustration over the slow pace of the Jall Killing Case trial.

A set of disgruntled army men gunned down Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, AHM Quamruzzaman and Captain M Mansur Ali, four close associates of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman, in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

The killing episode came two months and 18 days after Bangabandhu along with most of his family were assassinated in a military putsch.

A murder case was filed with Lalbagh Police Station following the day of killing, but the then government halted the trial issuing an indemnity ordinance.

Returning to power in 1996, 21

years after the killing, the Awami League government scrapped the indemnity ordinance that blocked trial of the killers.

After a police investigation, charge was framed against 23 including 17 army men. The trial began on April 12, 2001 with the deposition of complainant of the case and the court has so far recorded statements of 18 witnesses out of 75.

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'GODFATHER' LIST Chief whip files Tk 100cr suit against 13 AL top men

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday filed a Tk 100 crore defamation suit against 13 central Awami League (AL) leaders for including his and his son's name on a list of "101 BNP godfathers" with a Dhaka court yesterday.

He filed the case against AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, presidium members Abdur Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta,

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Thousands protest journalist's arrest in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several hundred people, including journalists, demonstrated in Shaheb Bazar and court areas in Rajshahi yesterday in protest against the arrest of photojournalist Selim Zahangir.

Selim, photojournalist of Dainik Janakantha and organising secretary of Bangladesh Photojournalist Association, was arrested on Saturday afternoon.

Magistrate Abdul Majid of a mobile court ordered his arrest when Selim was filming court men scuffling with Saiful Islam, a local, over his allegation of harassment by

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PHOTO: STAR

Open-air nursery owners illegally occupy a stretch of the Mirpur Road in front of the Teacher's Training College in Dhanmondi yesterday.

TOSHIBA Mashrafee might be fit in a week

PLASMA FRIDGE

IRANGS GROUP

Mashrafee might be fit in a week

SPORTS REPORTER

Injured fast bowler Mashrafee-bin-Mortuza returned to Chittagong last evening after having a second MRI done at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka yesterday.

The 20-year-old from Narail, who had already gone through a series of injuries since breaking into the international stage as the country's fastest bowler three year ago, twisted his right knee while bowling

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