

Istanbul bombers are Turks: Police

Seven held for bombings, Turkish press points finger at al-Qaeda

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish police have identified the two suicide bombers who carried out the attacks in Istanbul against British targets as two Turkish nationals, the mass-circulation Hurriyet newspaper reported yesterday.

It also said seven people had been detained in connection with the bomb blasts at the British consulate and the Turkish headquarters of British banking giant HSBC which killed at least 27 people and wounded hundreds more.

The newspaper said the bombers, who were also killed in Thursday's attacks, could be two suspected Islamist militants thought to have masterminded Saturday's deadly synagogue bombings also in Istanbul.

It said the two could be Azad Ekinci and Feridun Ugurlu, two suspected Islamist militants from the impoverished eastern town of Bingol who police

say had organised the trucks for the synagogue attacks.

It said the seven suspects were being questioned by anti-terror police, but gave no further details and there was no official confirmation.

Meanwhile, Turkish newspapers yesterday squarely laid the blame for the two suicide car bomb attacks in Istanbul on Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network.

"Al-Qaeda at war with Turkey," said the liberal Radikal daily.

"Murderer," read the front page of the mass-circulation Hurriyet newspaper above a photograph of a wounded woman with blood running down her face.

The Hurriyet reported that police had identified the two suicide bombers who carried out the attacks as two Turkish nationals and that seven people had been detained.

The United States and Britain warned yesterday of more attacks in

Turkey.

Turkish Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu said the bombings were carried out by suicide bombers who used two pick-up trucks loaded with explosives.

Turkey's Anatolia news agency quoted an anonymous telephone caller saying the attacks were a joint action by the al-Qaeda terror group and the Islamic Front of Raiders of the Great Orient (IBDA-C) -- a radical Sunni Muslim group whose aim is to set up an Islamic state and "stop the oppression of Muslims."

"More attacks are possible, as well as the possibility of fires, gas line explosions and collapsing buildings near the bomb sites," said the US State Department, adding that its consulate would be closed.

The British Foreign Office issued a similar warning and advised British citizens against travel to all major Turkish cities.



A young relative is comforted as she cries yesterday during the funeral of Ahmet Dama, 22, one of the victims of the terrorist attack on the British consulate in Istanbul Thursday.

Banskhali

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh.

The bloodbath triggered a swell of protest in the port city and its environs. Several hundred demonstrators under the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Oikya Parishad staged a demonstration in Chittagong city against the Banskhali massacre.

The agitators carried placards and banners, urging the authorities to punish the killers. The slogans like "Arrest the killers and hang them" reverberated throughout the city.

Leaders and workers of different socio-political organisations, visiting the scene, condemned the incident as the expression of primal bestiality.

Wednesday's bloodbath recalls another macabre incident in which Arati Bala Nath, her daughter and mother were burnt alive at Nath Para in Chambol Union of the upazila on May 8 after their house was set ablaze by a gang in a bid to grab land.

Leaders of Chittagong chapter of the Awami League laid out agitation programmes in protest against the killing.

"Police hardly took steps to nab the robbers," said Moslem Uddin, general secretary of AL Chittagong south unit, alleging clandestine links between law enforcers and robbers.

He also accused the ruling BNP leaders of harbouring criminals in the area.

Police said they failed to launch any major crackdown, as police stations were understaffed.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, visiting the spot Thursday midnight, expressed sympathy with the bereaved and assured them of exemplary punishment to the killers.

Shab-e-Qadr

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BSS adds: Jumatul Wida, the last Juma prayers of the holy month of Ramadan, was observed at all mosques across the country yesterday.

In Dhaka, the largest congregation was held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque where thousands of devotees, including women, took part. Khatib of the mosque Maulana Obaidul Hoque led the prayers.

A special munajat led by the Khatib was also offered, seeking blessings of the Almighty for peace, progress and prosperity of the country as well as Muslim ummah.

Arrangements were also made on the roads and southern lawn outside the national mosque to accommodate the devotees.

Settlers flee Assam after bloody attacks

REUTERS, Guwahati

Thousands of migrants rushed to leave India's northeast state of Assam yesterday after days of violence in which at least 34 people have died and hundreds of homes torched.

Most of the dead are settlers from neighboring Bihar state in a conflict triggered by competition for jobs in Assam.

Thousands of settlers, some leaving behind their possessions, crowded railway stations across the state to catch trains headed for Bihar.

"We want to leave this place at the earliest. Our lives are at risk," said Raghu Naraian, a Bihar laborer, waiting at Guwahati's railway station with his wife and three children.

"Most of them (Biharis) are traveling without tickets as they fled leaving behind whatever they had in their houses and they have no money," said Ashim Dey, a railway ticket collector.

Peace has returned slowly to the state after troops were deployed to quell an orgy of killing, looting and arson that began on Monday.

"The situation has fast returned to normal though some minor incidents of assaults have taken place in interior areas," K.D. Tripathi, Assam's interior

commissioner, told Reuters.

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), fighting for an independent Assam nation, on Wednesday ordered Biharis to leave or be killed. The group has been blamed for most of the killings this week.

Army soldiers patrolled the riot-torn areas, set up check-points and raided possible hideouts of attackers.

State authorities said they had banned people from gathering in groups in public places.

A ban on sale of petrol and kerosene in cans remained in place to stop mobs using them to start fires.

"We have relaxed curfew in some areas after assessing the ground situation, but the night curfew continues in most towns," interior commissioner Tripathi said.

More than 700 people suspected of involvement in rioting have been arrested from across the state, police said.

The violence was triggered by attacks on Assamese train travelers in Bihar last week after reports of assaults on Bihar students who came to Assam to do tests for railway jobs. Assamese students feared Biharis would snatch the prized jobs.

AL: False cases

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recently. "We will face it legally and politically," said Nasim, commenting on the charges against him. He demanded withdrawal of the chargesheet, saying it was filed to hide the real killers.

"Bachhu was a party leader and very close to me. But the chargesheet said I met some BNP and Jatiya Party leaders to kill him. This line of the chargesheet is enough to prove the use of falsehood by the coalition government," Nasim said.

Asked why the chargesheet was not filed during the previous AL government, Nasim said the investigation was taking time to find out the killers of Bachhu.

The AL did not intend to harass its political rivals by implicating them in the case, he said.

AL presidium members Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Obaidul Kader, Mukul Bose, Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder,

Akhteruzzaman, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdul Mannan Khan, Ashim Kumar Ukil and BM Mojamal Huq were present.

The AL leaders alleged that charges were pressed against Nasim as instructed by a Dhaka-based senior official of the Criminal Investigation Department of police.

Sengupta demanded a judicial probe into Bachhu killing to unmask the real killers.

Jalil said during the killing Nasim was not even in Pabna.

Failing to improve law and order the alliance government is trying to shift the blame on to the opposition and exterminate the leaders and activists of the AL.

The carnage of five people in Pabna and 11 in Banskhali of Chittagong amply shows the free fall of law and order under the alliance rule, Jalil said.

Popping freed

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stunning pictures of one of the world's best-known pop stars in handcuffs.

The mug shot taken of Jackson, posted on the sheriff's Web site and widely circulated on the Internet, showed the 45-year-old singer in lipstick and eyeliner, his cheeks sunken, looking tense and haggard with long hair hanging over one eye.

The cameras kept rolling as Jackson returned to Las Vegas, where bystanders raced into the streets to greet his car as it travelled through that city. At stoplights, Jackson's arm extended from a passenger window to shake hands with fans.

Though Jackson's arrest came after a lengthy investigation by Santa Barbara County authorities, no formal charges have yet been levied against him and a police spokesman said it could be several more days before the papers were filed.

District Attorney Thomas Sneddon has said Jackson will be charged under a California law that defines molestation as "arousing, appealing to, or gratifying the lust, passions or sexual desires of" the offender or a child under age 14.

The charge carries a penalty of three to eight years in prison and stems from accusations made by a single young boy who stayed at Jackson's ranch in the hills above Santa Barbara.

Kolkata poet sues Taslima

BSS, New Delhi

A Kolkata poet has filed Indian Rupees 11 crore defamation suit against

Taslima Nasreen for character assassination in her latest autobiographical novel, the NDTV (New Delhi Television) reported.

The TV network described it as "the most expensive literary litigation in recent times."

"Taslima Nasreen has written fictitious fantasies on sexual involvement. I was surprised to know how one could write like this. This is an invasion of someone's privacy, unethical, illegal and immoral," the NDTV quoted the Kolkata poet S Hasmat Jalal as saying.

Kolkata's literary circle is worried about the second version of the book, Duikhanda (in two parts), to be out soon, said the NDTV report.

The second part of her book is apprehended to be a kiss and tell on Kolkata's literary giants, who nurtured her to be the Frankenstein, commented executive and voracious reader Indrani Sen.

Kolkata High Court yesterday appointed a receiver to confiscate all copies of the already published part.

FM dismisses

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Bangladeshi nationals in India.

A correspondent attracted his attention to reports that the Indian deputy high commissioner in Dhaka did not come to the foreign ministry to receive an aide-memoire from the government over certain remarks by former Indian high commissioner in Dhaka ML Tripathi. The aide-memoire was later faxed to the Indian authorities.

Besides, news reports say the Indian information minister did not show up at a dinner hosted in New Delhi in honour of visiting Bangladesh Information Minister Tariqul Islam. As a retaliatory measure, Bangladesh Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain also did not attend the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) health ministers' conference in the Indian capital.

"These are not very serious issues," Khan said, indicating any dispute between Dhaka and New Delhi would be resolved by discussion through diplomatic channel.

Regarding deportation of alleged Bangladeshi nationals in India, Khan said he would not comment on the Indian High Court judgement on the issue, but those who went to India for medical treatment or tourism must come back while Indians now working in Bangladesh must leave after their work ends.

"But it would not be acceptable if Indians are deported in the name of deporting illegal Bangladeshis," Khan said.

About fresh 'push-in' bids by the Indian authorities, he said, "We shall

Ahmadia mosque

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about two hundred policemen stationed there since the first such attack after Tarabi prayers Thursday night, intercepted them.

The mob became violent and tried to break through the police cordon. They pelted brickbats at the policemen to keep their way when policemen resorted to baton charge.

Some 10 people were hurt in the police action. The injured were admitted to the Metropolitan Hospital in Tejgaon.

Later during khutba (sermon) of Juma prayers, the Khatib called the Kadianis 'Kafer' (non-Muslims) saying they do not follow Prophet Mohammed and demanded declaration of the Ahmadia sect as non-Muslim and the closure of the mosque.

The protesters gathered in front of the Nabisco Biscuit and Bread Factory in Tejgaon after the prayers. Addressing a demonstration there, Khatib Mahmudul Hasan Momtazi and other leaders asked "the real Muslims" to wage a jihad against the 'Kafer Kadianis'.

The speakers there asked the mob to get 'properly equipped' and head to the Kadiani Mosque to evict the Kadianis.

Later, a procession of about 5,000 people with bamboo and wooden sticks and brickbats took out a procession towards the mosque shouting slogans against the Kadianis.

Hundreds of anti-Ahmadia mobs tried to break through six police barricades put up around the mosque and began to beat up the policemen. "There was a rain of brickbats followed by charge of sticks," Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Tejgaon Police Station, Ruhul Amin, said while describing the mob violence.

Attacked from various directions, the

policemen called for reinforcement and over 300 policemen joined them. Police then resorted to baton charge to disperse the mob.

Some 20 protesters and passers-by were injured in the incident.

As policemen fired 70 tear gas canisters to disperse the mob, a homemade bomb was hurled at the police. However, none was hurt.

Angry mob snatched two police motorbikes and set them ablaze near the Mohakhali bus terminal. As police charged baton there, more than 10 other people were injured.

Eighteen policemen were injured in the mob violence. They were rushed to Police Hospital at Rajarbagh.

However, police succeeded in dispersing the crowd at around 4:00pm. Many of the anti-Ahmadia Muslims offered Asr prayers on the road.

Kadiani leader and owner of the land of the Kadiani Mosque, Rafiq Ahmed, said, "Khatib Mahmudul Hasan Momtazi has been spreading smear against us since 1992 and was conspiring to oust us from here."

"We are Muslims and follow the ideals of Prophet Mohammed and have started praying at this mosque since 1947," he said. "As the Khatib and his followers were inciting people against us, we filed a general diary with the Tejgaon Police station on November 6."

"As they are not Muslims, they should not have any mosque," Sohrab Hossain Mohan, an anti-Ahmadia said during the incident.

A huge contingent of police were deployed in the area to ward off further violence.

Rockets slam

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On Thursday, a suicide car bomber killed at least four people in the northern city of Kirkuk near the offices of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Its leader Jalal Talabani is the head of the US-appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

Guerrilla attacks have killed 180 US soldiers since Washington declared major combat in Iraq over on May 1. On Thursday, an American soldier was killed and two wounded when explosives were detonated beside their convoy west of Baghdad.

The US military has responded to the attacks with tougher military tactics, using aerial bombing, satellite-guided missiles and mortars to target suspected guerrilla hideouts.

AFP, adds: A homemade launcher fitted with 30 rockets was found early yesterday in a street near the Italian embassy in Baghdad, Iraqi police chief General Ahmed Ibrahim told the news agency.

The launcher and rockets were placed on a cart and kitted with a timer linked to a car battery, he said at the scene, adding he believed the same people were responsible as those who carried out Thursday's bombings in Istanbul.

"I saw a man stop his cart in front of my shop and run away. I went and alerted the police straight away," witness Mohammed Sabbah said.

A November 12 suicide bombing of Italy's police base in the southern city of Nasiriyah killed 19 Italians and nine Iraqis.

Nicolo Pollari, head of Italy's military intelligence services, said Tuesday the risks of renewed attacks on Italian interests in Iraq were "very high".

Tanguar haor

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been plundering its fish resources in several crore taka a year."

Sources pointed out that organised groups backed by a section of leaders of successive ruling parties have been involved in looting the haor's fish wealth year after year.

Meanwhile, the plan for establishing a fish sanctuary in Tanguar haor and preserving its other natural resources under the Ramsar project is yet to be implemented. Sources attributed the delay to indecision of the policy makers and failure to select investors for the huge project.

Moreover, the move to lease out the water body was foiled by powerful quarters repeatedly over the last three years.

The nearly 4,000 acre Tanguar haor is home to about 60,000 birds of different species and 140 types of fish. Besides, over one lakh guest birds fly to the area during winter.

Taskforce

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coalition government took power in October 2001.

Formed on January 28, 1998, the taskforce was given the responsibility to prepare a list of internal refugees displaced by the bush war in the hill tracts. The long-drawn conflict ended after the previous Awami League (AL) government signed the CHT peace agreement on December 2, 1997.

After the pact, the refugees returned home from camps in India but they didn't get back their dwellings lost to grabbers during their long absence, and thus became internal refugees, or refugees in their own land.

The then AL government, in line with the peace agreement, formed the nine-member taskforce headed by Dipankar to address the rehabilitation issue. Accordingly, the office of the taskforce was set up at Khagrachhari district headquarters in late 1998.

During the AL's tenure, the taskforce held 11 meetings, although Jana Sanghati Samity boycotted the ninth meeting protesting inclusion of non-tribal people on the refugee list. The committee identified 1,28,314 families as internal refugees -- 90,208 indigenous and 38,156 Bangalees.

Jubo League leader

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Swapan's neighbours rushed to the spot after seeing the flames and rescued the trapped victims. The attackers left a banner of the so-called Santrash Nirmul Committee (Committee for uprooting terrorism) at the scene.

Local people said Swapan had enmity with local Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Hassan, a notorious criminal of Jhalakathi accused in several cases including murder.

They said he leads a criminal group called Hassan Bahini and is loyal to Jhalakathi district Jubo Dal President Mir Ziauddin Mizan.

In 2000, Hassan allegedly murdered a local woman Anwara Begum and falsely implicated Swapan and five others in a murder case.

But Swapan and the others were released from jail about two months ago after being exonerated from the

murder charges following an investigation by the CID (Criminal Investigation Department).

Instead, the CID this time filed a murder case against Hassan -- plaintiff of the original case -- and his seven associates. All the eight accused have gone into hiding after the case was filed.

Sources in the police said the arson attack could be in revenge for the reversal of events leading to Hassan's incrimination in the murder.

Police said Swapan, the Jubo League leader, is also accused in a number of criminal cases.

Local administration officials visited the spot. No case was registered till filing of this report last night.

This is the second arson attack in 48 hours after robbers in Chittagong's Banskhali burnt to death 11 members of a Hindu family in the early hours of Wednesday.

Gas field for Niko

FROM PAGE 1

CIBL says the sale has already taken place and Niko should replace it with immediate effect, while Niko says the shares belong to it with retrospective effect from January 1 this year.

BNP lawmaker and senior lawyer Khandaker Mahbubuddin is scrutinising the document as Petrobangla's legal advisor.

If cleared, Niko will not only take over the CIBL shares now, it will become the block's operator from April upon completion of three years of the PSC for block 9. The block's present operator Irish company Tullow that holds 30 percent share cannot accept the change, it said officially.

Tullow's Legal and Commercial Director Graham Martin earlier told the press, "When the PSC was signed in April 2001, we agreed to the idea of having Chevron-Texaco as the operator (after April 2004) considering their experience and strength in the development phase," Martins said.

"But now the situation has changed. We can never accept Niko as the operator." Tullow's frustration runs deep because it got the highest attention of the previous Awami League government initially and had also technically and financially qualified for the second round block bidding in which Niko was found disqualified.

Tullow was also set to get blocks 9 and 11, but as the government faces tremendous pressure from US lobby and public criticism, it had to share the block with US company CIBL.

Sources said the deal would undermine the PSC as a legal document. "We have seen violation of PSCs in renewal of contracts with Occidental and UMC. But not in share transfer," one of the sources said.

Explaining the risk of creating a bad precedence, a source said, "This essentially ridicules the selection process of the government in finding companies."

Meanwhile, Niko also got its 'marginal' field deal done by using political lobbies despite Petrobangla's reservations.

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Mothers' vigil outside school

FROM PAGE 12

schools and back home by a guardian, be it the mother, father or some authorised attendant regularly.

In most cases, the duty of escorting a child falls on the mother. A problem arises if the school is situated some distance away from the child's residence. Some schools may have their own transports for carrying their students, but their capacity may be limited on account of demands made for using the facility from different city areas. In these situations, the mother or her authorised representative cannot afford to return home after leaving the child in school. Because of the distance in such cases, a second trip to the school when the child's classes are over for escorting him back home may not be possible on account of the cost of conveyance and the time factor. In such circumstances, the mother or her female proxy prefers to remain near the school premises throughout the school hours.

Because of the compulsive period of waiting, many mothers are seen to resort to peculiar strategies. Near the schools there may be vacant pavements or footpaths under the shade of trees. Some enthusiastic mothers keep a couple of straw mats within the school premises, which are brought out for use when the school hours begin. In some schools, some benches are kept outside for the waiting mothers. In winter, such spots serve quite well for the purpose of enjoying sunshine. The problem arises during summer when the waiting ladies spread

out straw mats for gossip sessions.

The gossip sessions of waiting ladies present interesting features. Such sessions tend to cover a wide range of subjects from kings to cabbages, as the expression goes. Sometimes, they also compare notes about the academic performance of their respective wards. The problems of daily life figure in their discussions. Some bring flasks of tea or coffee or small transistor radios to relieve the tedium of waiting. Some munch packets of peanuts to add zest to the long discussions. A problem, however, arises during the rainy season. During spells of rain or storm, the waiting ladies may rush into the covered shelters within the school. Some take shelter under the covered porticos of adjacent buildings. There is no doubt that, as a result of their daily sittings panning over a long period of time, a sort of bond develops among them. Such assemblies of waiting ladies often provide materials to advertising agencies to frame interesting advertisements for their various products.

An interesting feature of the waiting assemblage is the display of a variety of colourful dresses worn by the waiting ladies. Such dresses sometimes indicate trends of current fashions to the benefit of the younger mothers, in particular, interested in such matters. It has also been seen that taking advantage of such a large assembly of waiting ladies, some hawkers of peanuts, chatpatti, fuchka, etc. run a brisk business. Sellers of candies, chocolates, ice cream similarly get good business when the school

children come out at the end of their classes.

Sometimes poignant scenes are seen when guardians of some small children fail to turn up in time at the end of the classes and such children begin sobbing. Their distress ends with the arrival of their guardians soon afterwards.

The daily grind of waiting for the mothers outside the school premises except during holidays is a significant aspect of our social life, which, in the urban context, has given rise to nucleus families which offer no scope for additional family members to do the usual chores of escorting small school children which were easily possible under the joint family system now on the verge of extinction.

There are some positive aspects of the picture of waiting mothers outside school premises. On account of the close association among them, an atmosphere of bonhomie, which paves the growth of a sense of bond, goes a