

Rockets slam into Iraq oil ministry, hotels

REUTERS, Baghdad

Guerrillas fired rockets from donkey carts yesterday into Iraq's oil ministry compound and two Baghdad hotels used by foreign contractors and journalists, in the latest strikes on targets linked to the US-led occupation.

In another development, a rocket launcher was found near Italian embassy in Bagdad.

Flames and smoke belched from the oil ministry complex, which controls Iraq's most important industry, crucial for funding reconstruction after decades of conflict and sanctions.

Guests streamed out of the heavily fortified Sheraton and Palestine

hotels, which face each other near the banks of the Tigris river, after rockets punched holes in their walls, scattering concrete and broken glass.

"We saw a big flash -- there was just one big bang and then lots of crashing glass," said Dihyaa Salem, a manager at the Sheraton. "There was screaming as everyone left their rooms."

At least one person was badly wounded and others suffered cuts from flying glass. One rocket hit an unoccupied room in the Palestine, blowing a large hole in the wall.

"There was one person badly injured. I saw him taken away," said Loay Yunnis, general manager of the Palestine. "There was blood all over."

Another rocket hit an external lift shaft in the Sheraton, sending debris

crashing down through the glass ceiling of the hotel's lobby.

Reuters journalists staying in the Sheraton were woken by the blast and the shouts of panicking guests.

Colonel Peter Mansoor of the 1st Armored Division said both the Oil Ministry and the hotels were hit by rockets fired from launchers hidden under agricultural goods on donkey carts.

Close to the Palestine hotel, a donkey cart was lying on its side with several rockets spilling out on to the road.

"This shows the variety as they try to get one step ahead of us and they're going to use varying techniques. Most people would not think of a donkey cart being used to fire rockets from,"

U.S. Colonel Brad May said. "It's certain that you'd have the element of surprise by using a donkey cart."

US soldiers said a man was also detained near the hotels with rockets in a van.

Guerrillas have mounted frequent attacks on occupying troops, foreign organizations and Iraqis working with them. Last month rockets were fired at a hotel used by officials in the US-led administration, killing one soldier.

Many foreign organisations have left following a series of suicide car bomb attacks, including a blast that destroyed the headquarters of the United Nations in August, killing 22 people.

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Govt framing false cases to harass leaders: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday accused the coalition government of framing opposition leaders and activists, including former home minister Mohammad Nasim, in false cases to take political revenge.

The coalition of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami is plotting to harass its political opponents, senior AL leaders alleged at a press conference at the party's Dhammondi office and vowed to face 'the conspiracy' both legally and politically.

The press conference was organised to protest submission of a chargesheet in Pabna Pourasabha chairman Shahidullah Bachhu killing case against frontline AL leader Nasim.

Bachhu was killed in April 1997 and police filed the chargesheet

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Police motorcycles go up in flames as anti-Ahmadia people set the vehicles alight after snatching them from the law enforcers. The rampage came as part of a series of attacks on more than 500 policemen who stood guard around an Ahmadia mosque at Nakhla para in Dhaka to protect it from attackers yesterday.

Popking freed on \$3m bail

REUTERS, Santa Barbara

Michael Jackson, who soared to dizzying heights as an entertainer, yesterday found himself facing the possibility of a breathtaking fall as he awaited child molestation charges that could destroy his career and send him to prison if convicted.

But the self-proclaimed "King of Pop" -- who was whisked from Las Vegas to California and back on Thursday just long enough to surrender to police and post \$3 million bail -- called those charges an outrageous lie and predicted that he would ultimately be exonerated.

"Lies run sprints, but the truth runs marathons," Jackson said, according to a written statement released by his publicist. "The truth will win this marathon in court."

Jackson's legal drama, which began on Wednesday when more than 60 police officers raided his Neverland Valley Ranch looking for evidence, has riveted much of the nation and produced

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Taskforce for CHT internal refugees in limbo over chairman's status

PINAKI ROY

A taskforce crucial for the rehabilitation of internal refugees in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is yet to launch its operation because of a controversy over the status of its newly appointed chairman.

After lying vacant for over two years now, the post of the Taskforce for Chittagong Hill Tracts Refugee Rehabilitation Affairs (TCHTRRA) chairman was filled recently.

The prime minister on October 13 approved Samiran Dewan as the chairman of the taskforce, headed earlier by then AL lawmaker Dipankar Talukdar, who stepped down in August 2001 to contest the October 1 ballot.

Samiran is a former chairman of Khagrachhari district council. Jafar Ahmed, a local Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader, was also named a member of the nine-member taskforce, the rest of which are ex officio members.

But indecision on the chairman's

official status, which used to be equivalent to a state minister, has left the taskforce in limbo.

Moni Swapan Dewan, deputy minister for CHT affairs, recently wrote to the prime minister requesting her to give Samiran at least the status of a deputy minister.

"The member secretary of this committee is the divisional commissioner. So, how do I fit in there if I'm not given higher status than him."

Secretary of the CHT ministry Syed Mustak said that the government was thinking of redefining the status of the chairman and it would be decided soon.

As yet, the new committee has not held a meeting and no financial allocation for running the committee operation has been made. No one of the 10 employees of its office at Khagrachhari district headquarters has received salary since the

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No trace of abducted student yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female student is yet to be recovered five days into her abduction in the capital while her family alleges police are reluctant to act promptly.

Munmun Mohsin was abducted on her way to a coaching centre at Tajmahal Road of Mohammadpur from their Shyamoli residence on Monday.

A brilliant student, Munmun passed the SSC examinations this year from Vigarunnisa Noon School and College with GPA-5.

A case was filed with Mohammadpur Police Station.

The victim was a member of Alor Michhil-2003 of Zia Shishu Academy.

In a joint statement yesterday, Secretary of the academy M Humayun Kabir and other office bearers demanded immediate steps to rescue the abducted student.

Nuruzzaman alleges physical assault by BNP leader in police custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Contractor Nuruzzaman, who is on a two-day remand at the Srimangal Police Station (PS), was admitted to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital after he fell sick Thursday night in police custody.

He told The Daily Star that the complainant of the case Shahed, the general secretary of Srimangal unit BNP and a uniformed policeman physically assaulted him inside the police station while he was serving a two-day remand. At one stage of the assault he fell on the floor, Zaman claimed.

The OC of Srimangal PS also asked him to sign a confessional statement or to face further physical violence in the Moulvibazar PS, he added. Influential quarters also tried to stop his transfer to the Sylhet Medical College Hospital, but as his condition deteriorated he was brought to the hospital for treatment

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Drive to stop plunder of Tanguar haor

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

At long last, the authorities have launched a five-month drive to stop plunder of fish resources worth millions in the massive Tanguar haor (water body) by influential groups.

The vast water body in Sunamganj was officially declared a Ramsar Site in 2000.

Under the drive, two teams of police and ansar led by two magistrates and equipped with speedboats patrol the haor round the clock. Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel are also involved in the drive, official sources

said.

Two temporary camps with 22 police and ansar personnel each have been set up at strategic points of the haor and two more will be set up soon.

The district administration of Sunamganj is conducting the drive, funded by the environment and finance ministries.

Deputy Commissioner of Sunamganj Jafar Siddique said, "This time we are determined to free the haor from the grip of unauthorised people, who had

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FM dismisses reports of fresh strains in ties with Delhi

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday rejected outright media reports suggesting strains in relationship between Bangladesh and India, saying the two next-door neighbours must work together for mutual benefits by resolving all disputes through discussion.

"Bangladesh and India are destined to work together considering their geography, history, politics and cultural background," he said, adding that it is nothing unusual for close neighbours to have ups and downs in their relationship.

Khan made the remarks talking to journalists at an iftar party at the National Press Club, following media reports that Dhaka-Delhi relations became strained and that Indian authorities were contemplating new moves to deport alleged

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DOWN TO EARTH

Mothers' vigil outside school premises

A S M NURUNNABI

There are more than a dozen schools for children in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area. A common sight outside such school premises is the assembly of groups of mothers or wards of children attending the schools. The sight of such large groups of waiting mothers outside every school for children is so conspicuous that it has become part of the city scenario in that area.

This seems to mark a change in our social ethos towards school-going children of the new generation.

There was a time three or four decades ago when children's schools were not so numerous within a limited area and children used to be escorted, where necessary, by some adult member of the family at the time of their going to and return from school. There were very few cases of waiting by any member of the school-going

children while the school hours lasted. There was some arrangement on a small scale at that time made by school authorities for a waiting room of some sort for those who chose to wait out the entire period of the school hours.

Times have since changed. Children of schools in lower classes in the city in most cases are now required to be escorted to their

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3 killed, 15 hurt in Comilla road mishaps

UNB, Comilla

Three people were killed and 15 injured in two road accidents in the district yesterday.

The first accident occurred at Harakhila in Laksam when a Comilla-bound tank lorry hit a van driver at about 8:30am.

The van driver, Sohel, 20, died on the spot.

In the second mishap, two people were killed and 15 injured when a Comilla-bound bus from Dhaka fell into a roadside ditch at Kutumbopur in Chandina Upazila at about 9:00am.

One of the dead was identified as Champa, 15.

The injured were admitted to a local hospital.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
26	22		5-14
27	23	4-55	5-14

Prayer Timings

November 22

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-55	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-14	5-21
Esha	7-30	8-00

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