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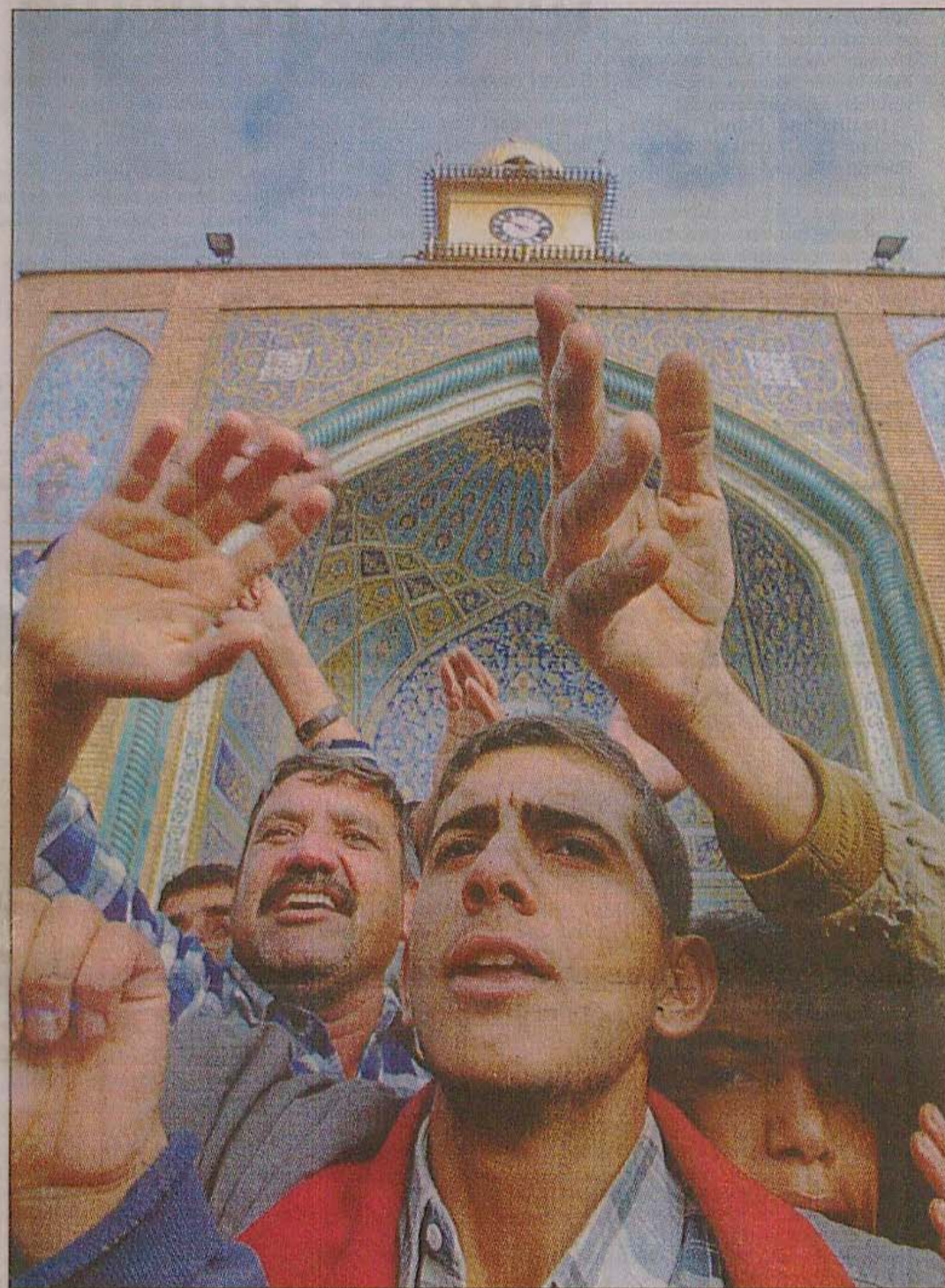
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US troops kill 54 Iraqis in a fierce firefight



AFP, Baghdad

American troops have killed 54 suspected Iraqi insurgents, which Iraqi medics say included eight civilians, in the northern city of Samarra, capping the worst weekend of violence in seven months of occupation which saw the deaths of seven Spaniards, two Koreans, two Japanese, two US soldiers and a Colombian.

US commanders previously said they killed 46 Iraqis, all of them insurgents, in the clashes Sunday afternoon and evening, which they described as the heaviest faced in Iraq by the 4th Infantry Division (4ID) which patrols the region.

They yesterday upped the death toll to 54, without specifying whether the additional dead were insurgents or civilians.

In another incident, an American soldier was killed west of the Iraqi capital Baghdad yesterday after his patrol came under attack from guerrillas, the US military said.

A medic at Samarra hospital said the bodies of "eight civilians including a woman and a child," were received at the hospital.

It was not immediately clear whether the figure included two Iranian pilgrims said to have been killed in their bus.

Hospital director Abed Tawfiq told AFP "more than 60 people wounded by gunfire and shrapnel from US rounds are being treated at the hospital."

He said there were so many casualties from US fire during the intense clashes with insurgents who ambushed American convoys in the town Sunday afternoon and evening that they had had to be treated in the hospital's corridors.

The town's police chief Colonel Ismail Mahmud Mohammed said around 20 of the wounded sustained their injuries while worshipping at a mosque during sunset prayers.

He said the insurgents who had attacked US forces had already withdrawn when the Americans returned fire, and charged that the troops had done so indiscriminately with all weapons in their arsenal.

Lieutenant Colonel Bill MacDonald, a spokesman for the 4ID, previously described the events in Samarra as the biggest attack on

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Shiite men protest the damage to their mosque after it was hit by US army fire in the town of Samarra, 125 kms north of Baghdad. Iraqi doctors report eight civilians were killed in the attack.

No headway in Badda arms haul probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators could make no headway in their probe into the origin and route of the arms and ammunition seized at Kuril Badda Sunday night. Nor could they identify the racket behind the gunrunning.

"We are yet to get any information (about the gunrunning)," Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ashraf Huda said last night. "We hope to make progress after interrogating the criminal, Abdul Aziz, who was arrested injured on the spot."

Aziz is still undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital. Two policemen -- Sub-inspector (SI) Saidur Rahman and Constable Neyamat Ali -- who were also wounded in the gunfight with the criminals during the raid are also being treated there.

Four AK-47 rifles, 990 rounds of bullets, two foreign-made revolvers, seven revolver bullets, 20 hand grenades, two 2-kg plastic explosive bombs, four time bombs, half a kilogram of gunpowder, six electric detonators, four-and-a-half yard detonation wire, two firing devices with charger, two time devices and a walkie-talkie were seized from a signboard shop at Kuril Badda after a gunfight between a patrol team of Badda police and the racket at around 4:00am Sunday.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police has been assigned to investigate the arms haul.

Joint forces of police and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)

picked up 38 persons from Kuril Badda area during a four-hour curfew beginning at zero hours yesterday. But no-one could be linked to the gunrunning. Twenty-one of them were shown arrested and produced before court.

"We are checking if the 21 arrestees have any criminal records," said Golam Rasul, deputy commissioner of police (north zone).

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Intelligence poor cops depend on luck to cut crime

STAR REPORT

Sunday's huge arms seizure in Dhaka has once again lent greater credence to recent coinage that police success largely depends on luck rather than intelligence.

The police intelligent network has virtually congealed into dysfunction because of unaccountability of the fund used on informers.

"There is no auditing and no limit

to the fund," one of them said.

An accidental gunshot on Sunday led a plucky mobile police team to the arms cache in Badda that included four AK-47 assault rifles, two revolvers, 20 hand grenades, four time bombs, a huge number of AK-47 bullets and explosives.

The weapons were smuggled into Dhaka from across the borders on land route raising the hackles of people who wonder how they could dodge so many security rings.

There was no intelligence in such an unprecedented haul after a firefight. "Had there been any intelligence, the police casualty could have been skipped," a home ministry official said yesterday.

By contrast, the army made a similar seizure in Khagrachhari acting on intelligence only two days before the Eid-ul-Fitr on November 23.

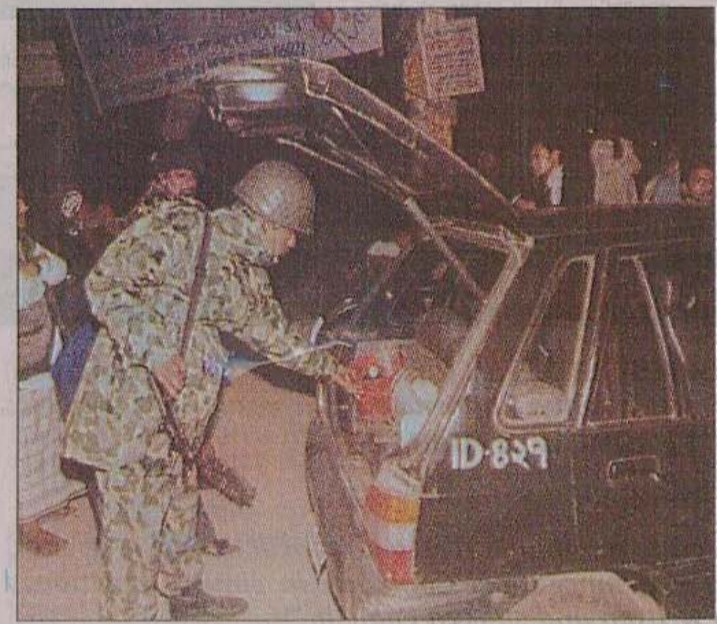
Earlier this year, sheer luck of police led them to the source of country's biggest ammo cache in Bogra. Angry villagers drew their attention of police to an abandoned truck that hid about 100,000 bullets and 200 kilos of explosives under a pile of pineapples.

Fortune also triumphed in the recovery of a bomb from Kotalipara three years ago when a tea boy saw a wire protruding from the ground.

"There are reports of abuse of police source fund," an official of the home ministry admitted.

In many cases, informants play dual roles, as they do not always get their full payment. They often leak

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Bangladesh Rifles men check a taxicab for illegal firearms during a night-time curfew in the capital's Badda area on Sunday, after police seized huge arms and ammunition here earlier.

Freedom fighters to get special status in society: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said the government will provide a special status for the freedom fighters (FFs) in society.

"The nation is proud of the valiant freedom fighters," said Khaleda while speaking at a reception to gallantry award winner FFs and members of the families of martyrs at the Armed Forces Division (AFD) in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

She recalled the courage and sacrifice of the martyrs of the War of Independence and prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls.

Khaleda said the government has formed a separate ministry to carry

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Shantu warns a volatile CHT

Non-implementation of pact

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council Jyotindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma warned that if the government does not implement the peace accord, the situation in the region would turn volatile again and the government would be responsible for that.

He said the government was not implementing the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord -- due to lack of goodwill.

He said this while speaking at a roundtable on "CHT situation --

aren't we heading towards a catastrophe?" The roundtable was held yesterday at the CIRDAP auditorium. Justice Habibur Rahman, former chief advisor of the caretaker government, was present as chief guest.

Habibur Rahman said that governments do not have faith in people and generally violate agreements. But it was still good that the government did not reject the accord as such, and was in the process of implementing it. "If the government fulfils the hills people's demands we will not lose anything."

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PCJSS siege today for CHT accord execution

Sixth anniversary of accord today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even six years after the signing of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord that ended two decades of insurgency in the hills region, uncertainty over its implementation plagues the highlanders.

The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has called for a siege programme on the sixth anniversary of the accord today and a strike on December 8, demanding implementation of the pact.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace

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BCS question leak rumours prove false, test underway

DU CORRESPONDENT

Proving reports of question leaks false, the first written test of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) was held peacefully yesterday.

The question paper of General Bangla (Compulsory) did not match with the papers sold in Dhaka and elsewhere as leaked ones and the Public Service Commission (PSC), that runs the examinations, believes some Mammonish quarters spread the rumour to make quick money.

The PSC sources said commission Chairman ZN Tahmida Begum discussed the allegation with its members and concluded that the reports of leaks were baseless.

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Economic coordination snarled up in inactivity

REIAUL KARIM BYRON

A high-profile coordination council constituted in March to ensure good economic management has failed to sit once in nine months when it is supposed to meet every three months.

A raft of issues including the price spiral of essentials, famine-like situation in the northern region and inflation that sparked uproar in recent months could have been better handled if the council performed, sources remarked.

They pegged the inactivity of the council as an example of the insincerity of the government in implementing various strategies and

schemes under pressure from donors.

Headed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, the council is mainly supposed to review the consistency of macro-economic policies, growth, inflation and revise limits and targets set during budget formulation.

"The council could not hold any meeting so far because it is still taking preparation," said a high official of the finance ministry.

"This is a council first of its type in Bangladesh."

The council is likely to sit in its first meeting sometime in December, headed.

But sources contradicted his

view, saying the council did not require the 'so-called preparations' to meet.

The nation faced some major problems since the formation of the council, a commerce ministry official said, adding: "When the prices of onion skyrocketed, the ministry proposed to the finance ministry in August to lower onion tariff."

"But the finance ministry sat on the proposal until November when the price spiral provoked a public outcry."

"The situation could have been easily avoided had there been better co-ordination between the minis

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Gas supply to some city areas to get suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gas supply to several city areas will remain suspended from 12:00 this noon to 6:00 tomorrow morning, while consumers of piped gas at many other city parts will experience low pressure during the same period.

Thas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd. said gas supply would remain suspended in the areas of Dakkhin Badda, Madhya Badda, Ananda Nagar, Post Office Road, Sarakul and certain parts of Rampura and Shahjadpur.

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2 1/2 yrs of lost childhood

STAR REPORT

Fourteen-year-old Jamal migrated to Dhaka from his home village in search of a living three years ago, but landed in a correctional centre by a twist of fate.

Jamal worked as a hotel boy and doubled up by pedalling rickshaw in daytime to earn some extra money to send his mother back home at Muktagachha in Mymensingh.

Son of late Abdul Mannan, Jamal was affectionately called Biman by his mother. He landed a

job at a Syedabad hotel and dreamt of growing financially able to help his family.

But police dashed his dreams, as they arrested him on April 26, 2001 in a blanket sweep against criminals in a case he was not even remotely connected with.

Jamal was taken on police remand twice for six days and a mindless legal system sent him to Dhaka Central Jail -- again to be shuttled to the juvenile correctional centre in Tongi 32 months ago, as he was a teenager.

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Rickshaw ban put on hold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The decision to ban rickshaws on six major roads from yesterday has been put on hold as Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) now wants to discuss it with the rickshawpullers and passengers.

It will also conduct a survey to judge public opinion in support of the move, said DTCB officials.

According to the government decision, the road stretching from Science Laboratory through Elephant Road, Shahbagh and National Press Club to College Road next to Bangabazar was supposed to become off-limits to rickshaws from December in the first phase.

In the second phase, the stretch from Russell Square to Azimpur via

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NAVANA GROUP

Welcome!

We warmly welcome Mr. Hiroshi Okuda Chairman of Toyota Motor Corporation and Chairman of Japan Business Federation on his first ever visit to Bangladesh.

We hope, Mr. Okuda's visit will heighten up the amity between Japan and Bangladesh.

TOYOTA

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