

Car bombing kills 66 in Baghdad market

AFP, Baghdad

At least 66 people were killed and 114 wounded yesterday when a car bomb struck the Baghdad Shia district of Sadr City, ripping through a massive security crackdown in the Iraqi capital.

A Sunni woman MP was also kidnapped in north Baghdad along with eight of her bodyguards, a day after al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden vowed the war would go on despite a peace plan launched by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

The vast Shia neighbourhood of Sadr City, a stronghold of militiamen loyal to Shia radical leader Moqtada Sadr, has been a repeated target for Sunni Arab insurgents amid mounting sectarian violence.

The massive car bomb went off as a police patrol passed through the district's Al-Ula market, which

was packed with morning shoppers, an interior ministry official said.

Witnesses said the bomb was concealed in a pick-up truck loaded with fruit and vegetables and that the driver blew himself up.

But security officials said initial reports suggested the bomb had been detonated remotely.

The force of the blast torched nearby market stalls and around 20 vehicles, an AFP photographer witnessed.

Fearful residents were seen desperately searching through the mangled wreckage for missing loved ones.

A US military vehicle, which attempted to approach the blast scene withdrew in the face of a hail of stones from angry residents.

Major General Jihad Taher al-Luabi, head of the interior ministry's anti-explosives unit told state televi-

sion: "The martyrs were of all sexes and ages -- innocent people. Their bones and flesh were crushed together."

"The impact of the explosion scattered pieces everywhere, as far as 500 metres (yards) from the scene," the general told state television.

Stressing that the security forces had asked for new equipment to detect car bombs, he said "if the prime minister is listening, please approve our request because this will save human lives."

Outside the city's Ibn Nafis hospital, a maimed survivor was carried out of an ambulance on a stretcher as a black-clad woman watched on sobbing.

Militiamen of Sadr's Mehdi Army threatened to take over the

Jail guards take revenge on football fans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Residents of Nazimuddin Road and its adjacent areas yesterday alleged angry jail guards ransacked their houses to take revenge after agitating football fans attacked them as the fans could not watch a part of Friday's World Cup match due to power cut.

The residents of Nazimuddin Road, Begum Bazar and Abul Hasnat Road alleged that a group of jail guards on Friday night stormed into their houses around 10:30pm. They looted valuables, ransacked furniture and beat them up severely and then left.

Sheikh Rafiq, a fruit trader of Begum Bazar said, "The jail guards snatched Tk 5,000 from me and damaged 100kg of mangoes which I had bought to sell later."

Emran Hossain Pathan, a madrasa teacher, said jail guards



Participants of a roundtable discussion jointly organised by the daily Prothom Alo, Shushashoner Janney Nagarik and The Daily Star at the latter's conference room yesterday.

5 sergeants closed for toll-taking

UNB, Chittagong

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) have closed five sergeants and one constable on charges of extortion.

DC Traffic Monir Hossain confirmed the report, saying that departmental proceedings will start against the accused sergeants and constable.

The video surveillance team caught red-handed Sergeant Abdur Rahim and Sergeant Abul Kashem while they were trying to extort money from a truck driver at GEC crossing on June 25, Sergeant Priyotosh Chakma and Sergeant Daud from port connecting road on June 28, and Sergeant Nizamuddin and constable Hafizuddin from GEC crossing on June 29.

The surveillance team has been constituted to stop police extortion from trucks and buses in the port city.



PHOTO: STAR

Sand traders have illegally filled up a part of the Shitalakkhya bank under the Kanchpur Bridge on the outskirts of the capital.

POWER OUTAGES Football fans ransack electricity offices

STAR REPORT

Angry soccer fans on Friday night attacked and ransacked Palli Bidyut Samity offices in Comilla and Sirajganj protesting power cuts during the Germany-Argentina World Cup quarterfinal.

In Comilla, protesters attacked Palli Bidyut Samity office at Burichang upazila headquarters at around 9:30pm after the power went out 15 minutes into the first quarterfinal football match, according to the UNB.

As the police tried to disperse the mob, they swooped on the law enforcers. During chase and counter-chase between the two sides, ten people, including two cops, were injured.

Later, the protesters put up barricades on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, disrupting traffic for about two hours.

Non-govt school, college teachers threaten strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Shikkhak-Karmachari Front, an organisation of non-government school, college and madrasa teachers and staff, yesterday announced to go on an indefinite strike from July 8 to press home their eight-point demand including 100 per cent basic salary from the government.

Two other teachers' organisations also announced to do the same from July 6 and 9.

At a press conference at the National Press Club, Jatiya Shikkhak Karmachari Front led by Principal Kazi Faruk Ahmed declared the indefinite strike in their institutions as part of their month-long series of programmes from July 5.

Their demands include providing 100 per cent basic salary, a 'respect-

able' amount of house rent, full festival allowances and medical allowances as per the latest pay scale from the national exchequer and withdrawal of the decision of 'stop-payment' of the teachers' salary.

"We will not submit any memorandum to the prime minister, as the government did not pay the least respect to the memorandum written with our blood," Principal Kazi Faruk Ahmed said at the press conference.

On July 5, the teachers and staff will observe daylong strike at their institutions across the country and express condemnation of the 2001 election manifesto of the ruling BNP by putting cross mark on the lines relating to the commitment of

RMG workers block city road for hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garment workers blockaded Rokeya Sarani at Sheorapara in the city yesterday and halted vehicular movement for four and a half hours protesting the expulsion of 28 workers from their factory and suspension of production.

The workers of SQ Sweaters Ltd at Sheorapara in Mirpur, who have been agitating to realise their nine-point demand for the last six months, withdrew the blockade following the factory owner's agreement of negotiations at 2:00pm today about their demands.

Six months ago, the authorities sacked 15 workers when around 1,500 workers of the factory launched a movement demanding appointment letters in line with labour law, better wages, timely wages, overtime allowances, bonuses, vacation during Eids and a few other privileges.

Pirates loot 22 trawlers, abduct 35 crews

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Pirates looted at least 22 trawlers, abducted 13 fishermen along with three trawlers and left 35 crews wounded in the Bay during hours between Friday noon to early Saturday.

It was the first block piracy since opening of the coast guard posts at Katka and Kachikhali areas in the Sundarbans.

Two bullet-injured crews-- Zafar, 31, and Manir, 26-- of the looted trawler FB Shahjalal were admitted to the Patharghata upazila hospital and later sent to the Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Victims said a gang of armed pirates, riding on trawlers, swooped on the fishermen at the Narikelbaria area of the Bay at around 12:30pm Friday.

The pirates indiscriminately beat up the crews and fishermen, opening fire on other fleeing trawlers.

No coastguard was found during the 13-hour long block piracy.

Palestinian PM's life 'at risk' if Israeli not freed

Air strikes on Gaza drags on as Israel rejects demands to free prisoners

AFP, REUTERS, Gaza City

Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya's life will be at risk if the wounded Israeli soldier detained by militants in the Gaza Strip is not freed, a senior Palestinian official warned yesterday.

Israel yesterday rejected demands from Palestinian militants who captured an Israeli soldier to free 1,000 prisoners from its jails and kept up air strikes on Gaza aimed at winning his release.

"His life is at risk if the Palestinian groups do not free the Israeli soldier," a high-ranking official in Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's office told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"There are Israeli threats against Ismail Haniya through the media,"

the official said, adding that Abbas had not received any direct messages from the Israeli government.

The militants seized Corporal Gilad Shalit in a raid across the Gaza Strip's frontier last Sunday, sparking a crisis that has sent Israeli-Palestinian relations to new lows.

"Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has reiterated that there will be no deals, that either Shalit will be released or we will act to bring about his release," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev, responding to the fresh demands.

A statement from the militants did not specify that freeing the 1,000 "Palestinian, Arab and Muslim prisoners" and ending Israel's Gaza assault would be in exchange for Shalit's freedom.

But a spokesman for the armed wing of the governing Hamas movement, one of the three factions that captured Shalit, said that was what it meant.

The statement from the groups appeared to cast doubt on the hopes of mediators that diplomacy could soon free Shalit, 19.

"We are declaring to the public our just and humanitarian demands," said the statement faxed to news agencies by the Hamas armed wing, the Popular Resistance Committees and Army of Islam.

It repeated an earlier call to free women prisoners and minors in exchange for information on Shalit-- the groups have not said if he is dead or alive.

6 bombs found in Satkhira house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Police on Friday night recovered six bombs from a house at Kuchpukur village in Sadar upazila.

Being informed, a police team led by Assistant Police Super (ASP) Delwar Hossain raided the house of Nazrul Islam at the village and recovered the bombs from the kitchen.

Sajeda Khatun, wife of Nazrul Islam, said some people kept a bag at their kitchen on the night and left the scene. She immediately informed the neighbours of the matter, who later informed the law enforcers.

ASP Delwar confirmed the incident. A case was filed with Sadar Police Station.

M'SINGH AMMO HAUL BDR quizzing 3 arrestees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) interrogating three indigenous people arrested in connection with the seizure of huge arms and ammunition at Monikura village under bordering Haluaghat upazila on June 30 is yet to get any information about its source and target.

BDR dug up firearms and ammunition including two AK-47 rifles with 81 magazines, a grenade launcher, 20 hand grenades, 347 mortar shells and 20 improvised devices at the house of Ashutosh Dronng Hashu and arrested him along with Kabir Baji and Bimol Mormu.

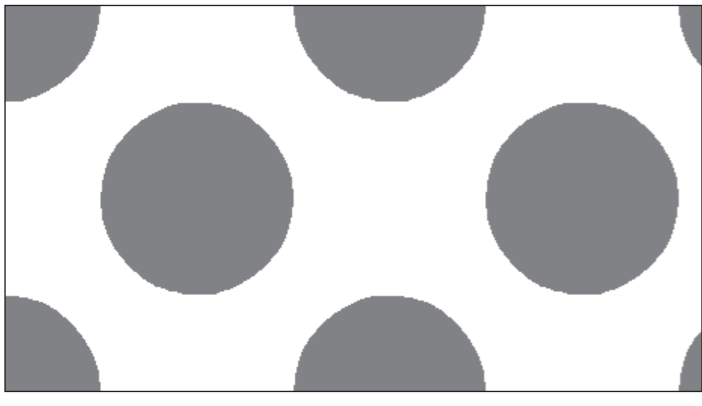
Law enforcement agencies have intensified vigilance in the area.

Prayer Timing		
July 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-17	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Workers of SQ Sweaters Ltd stage a sit-in on Rokeya Sarani in the capital's Mirpur area yesterday, demanding a meeting with the owners and realisation of their nine-point demand.



Lankan navy averts harbour attack

AP, Colombo

Sri Lankan forces sank a Tamil rebel boat as it approached a strategic harbour in the island's north, rebuffed an attack on an army patrol, and killed a suspected guerrilla in the east, the military said yesterday.

Mounting attacks have raised fears of a return to all-out civil war on this tropical island off the southern tip of India.

Late Friday, the Tamil Tiger rebels' sea wing appeared to be about to attack a strategic port in the northern Jaffa Peninsula, a