

80 militants killed in Pak madrasa raid

AFP, Khar

Pakistani helicopter gunships yesterday destroyed a madrasa used as an al-Qaeda-linked training camp near the Afghan border, killing up to 80 militants, officials and witnesses said.

The strike targeting a madrasa near Khar, the main town in Bajaur tribal agency, was the biggest for months in the restive frontier region where many al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgents have sought sanctuary since 2001.

The bodies of 20 people wrapped in sheets were laid on the ground for funeral prayers near the site and locals were still pulling corpses from the rubble and putting them in sacks, an AFP correspondent said.

"We have not carried out a body count, but information we have received from certain local sources and intelligence sources suggests that there may be up to 80 dead," chief military spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan told AFP.

"We had information about the presence of 70 to 80 miscreants, including some foreigners, who were engaging in militant training in this madrasa and we carried out an operation using gunship helicopters and precision weapons," Sultan said.

"Most of the compound was destroyed."

A local Taliban commander known as Maulvi Liaqat, who ran the madrasa and was wanted by the authorities for sheltering insurgents, was among the dead, a senior security official said on condition of anonymity.

Sultan said the madrasa compound was far from any civilian areas and added that no women or children were inside at the time of the attack, which happened at around 5:00 am (0000 GMT).

But another wanted cleric with links to Liaqat, Maulvi Faqir Mohammed, said that the dead were civilians and vowed that their deaths would be "avenged".

Witnesses said at least three

army helicopters swooped on the madrasa and then they heard a huge explosion before the choppers flew off. Most of the occupants were asleep while some had awoken for pre-dawn prayers, they said.

An Islamist legislator who attended the prayer service, Haroon Rashid, said afterwards that 83 people had been killed. Witnesses also said Liaqat was killed.

Three injured people had arrived at a hospital in Khar after the attack, a doctor said. An official earlier said eight had been brought in.

The attack came two days after thousands of pro-militant tribesmen gathered in Bajaur agency and chanted their support for al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar, security sources said.

The tribesmen also said they would continue "jihad" or holy war to enforce Islamic law.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

SSF, PGR take over security of Khaleda, Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Special Security Force (SSF) and President's Guard Regiment (PGR) yesterday morning took charge of the security of Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi residence Sudha Sadan.

Similar security has also been arranged for the former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

The security will be maintained by SSF and PGR until the results of the upcoming general elections are announced.

SSF was deployed at Hasina's residence at 12 midnight on October 27 as the eighth parliament was dissolved, but was withdrawn just after three hours.

Withdrawal of the SSF drew criticism from AL that termed it a conspiracy and abuse of power by the previous BNP government.

According to the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) 281/2002, the immediate past prime minister and the leader of the opposition are to be provided equal security facilities soon after the parliament dissolves.



A view of the crowd at the four-party alliance rally held at Naya Paltan in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Graft case proceedings against Ershad adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the proceedings of two graft cases filed against former president and Jatiya Party chairman HM Ershad till November 20 following time petitions by the defence lawyers.

Judge Malik Abdullah Al Amin of the Special Court for Dhaka Division set the date after Advocate Sheikh Serajul Islam submitted two separate petitions stating that his client Ershad could not appear before the court due to his personal difficulties.

Earlier on September 27, Ershad did not appear before the court on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

The Prime Minister's Office at Tejgaon in the capital was renamed Chief Adviser's Office yesterday after President Iajuddin Ahmed was sworn in as the chief adviser of the caretaker government on Sunday.

KILLING OF SIX Jamaat sues Jalil, Inu, Menon

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Jamaat leader on Sunday filed a murder case against 40 central leaders and activists of Awami League (AL), Workers Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) including AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu for killing six Jamaat activists at the North gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque on October 28.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Iraq bomb kills labourers as US toll passes 100 in Oct

AFP, Baghdad

A bomb ripped through a crowd of Shia labourers yesterday, one of six attacks in Baghdad that killed at least 36 people, as the monthly death toll for the US-led coalition in Iraq hit 105.

The blasts came as Britain evacuated its large consulate in the southern city of Basra after it came under repeated mortar attack, and one day after 17 Iraqi police were murdered when they left a nearby

British training base. Meanwhile, the US military said October had seen 96 US troops, four coalition soldiers from other countries and five American contractors killed, confirming it as the bloodiest month for the allies since January 2005.

The violence raging around the country will deepen Iraq's bitter sectarian divide and undermine efforts by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government and his US and British allies to end Iraq's 44-month-

old war. Interior ministry spokesman Brigadier General Abdel-Karim Khalaf said the worst bomb blast appeared to be the work of an extremist Sunni faction targeting Sadr City, a sprawling Shia slum in east Baghdad.

"This has the fingerprints of the Takfiris and al-Qaeda all over it," he said. "It was a bomb that exploded in an area where day labourers gather. We have 26 martyrs and 60 injured."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

LDP to watch Iajuddin for 2-3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly formed Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said that his party will observe the president's activities for the next 2/3 days as the chief of caretaker government to decide whether his activities are neutral or not.

"He (Iajuddin Ahmed) is not a non-political person, but we want to see if he acts neutrally," Badruddoza said in a press briefing

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Preparatory work for polls at final stage

UNB, Dhaka

Preparatory works are now at the final stage to hold the ninth parliamentary elections any day in January, the secretary to the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat said yesterday.

"Preparatory works for the elections are going on well...if the commission takes the decision, we are prepared to hold the elections any day in January," Abdur Rashid Sarker told reporters at his office.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: AFP

Members of Lebanese NGO Bahr Lubnan clean the oil spill at a beach in Jieh, south of Beirut yesterday, four months after the Israeli air strikes on a power plant left a thick layer of oil on miles of coastline.

Climate report issues wakeup call to world leaders

AFP, London

World leaders must act urgently to avert a looming environmental catastrophe, the author of a major British report, which sounds a wake-up call on climate change said yesterday.

In particular former World Bank chief economist Sir Nicholas Stern singled out economic powerhouses the United States, China and India, major polluters whose backing is crucial for any global solution.

Specifically he said the world must be prepared to pay now to prevent an economic fallout in the future which could be on the scale of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

"There is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we act now and act internationally," he said, launching a 700-page report in London.

"The task is urgent. Delaying action even by a decade or two will take us into dangerous territory. We must not let this window of opportunity close."

His message was backed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Two bodies found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered bodies of a listed criminal and an unidentified man from the city's Fakirapul and Sutrapur area yesterday.

The bullet-hit body of Monjurul Islam Swadhin, 35, was found inside a room of Arena Residential Hotel in Fakirapul in the afternoon. Hearing gunshots, the hotel employees informed the police, who came and recovered the body. A pistol was also seized from the spot.

Swadhin from the Motijheel AGB Colony area was a listed criminal, police said.

Meanwhile, the body of the man of around 40 packed in a carton was found in a dustbin from RK Mission Road at around 10:00am.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

US embassy greets chief adviser

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US embassy has congratulated President Iajuddin Ahmed on his assumption of the office of chief adviser to the caretaker government, according to a statement issued by the embassy here yesterday.

"The US embassy congratulates President Iajuddin Ahmed on his assumption of duties as chief adviser to the caretaker government. We wish him every success in his pledge to lead Bangladesh to free, fair, and credible elections."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Groups for Iajuddin's neutral role

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different civil society groups, professional bodies and non-government organisations yesterday urged Chief Adviser to the caretaker government President Iajuddin Ahmed to end the ongoing political crisis and play a neutral role in holding the next general elections in a free and fair manner.

They also called upon him to appoint persons above all controversies to the 10 advisers' posts, reduce politicisation and corruption in the administration, and ensure accountability of the political parties through introducing registration of the parties before the elections.

They condemned the violence in the last three days that left more than 20 killed and several thousand injured.

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Central Command Council Chairman Abdul Ahad Chowdhury in a statement said the chief adviser must prove his neutrality by reforming the Election Commission, cancelling "political" appointments in the administration, correcting the voter list, and creating a congenial environment for the election.

"The challenge before the chief

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Essentials turn costlier amid volatile politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of essentials including potato, eggs, oil, meat and fruits have once again increased even after the end of the Eid ul-Fitr, due to the volatile political situation across the country.

Although the demands for essentials have fallen sharply in the capital as a large number of its dwellers were unable to return to the city after observing Eid at their homes away from the capital due to the countrywide siege programme, the prices of many items shot up in the last four or five days.

Retailers and wholesalers attrib-

uted this price spiral to the country-wide siege programme, and unpredictable political atmosphere.

However, a few others complained that a section of unscrupulous businesspeople are creating artificial crisis to make hefty cash during the political turmoil.

"The transport system across the country has totally collapsed disrupting the supply of essentials and raising prices of the products," a retailer at New Market of the city told The Daily Star.

Cost of a dozen eggs has increased by Tk 6 and now selling at Tk 54 to 57 in retail market while potato is selling at Tk 28 per kg, which

was Tk 26, just two days back.

Onion price per kg has been increased by Tk 5 to 6. Wholesalers said its prices may come down after receiving fresh consignments after the political situation stabilizes.

Super palm oil is Tk 60 per litre now, but it was Tk 55 before the Eid. Retailers said price of edible oil is increasing by day, as the product is in short supply now.

One kg of pulses is now selling at Tk 70 per kg that was sold at Tk 65 four days ago.

Beef is being sold at Tk 170 per kg but somewhere traders are

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Tension continues to brew at secretariat

STAR REPORT

Showdown by two groups of government officials -- "politically victimised" ones and those who were 'beneficiaries' during the last five-year BNP rule -- created an uneasy situation inside Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday.

A group of officers led by Shamsul Alam, who was assistant personal secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, went to different sections of the establishment ministry at 11:00am yesterday,

witnesses said.

But when Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury, assistant personal secretary to the opposition leader along with some others made OSD by the BNP-Jamaat alliance government went to the establishment ministry, some fourth class employees misbehaved with them.

Following the incident, several officers including Alauddin and Abu Alam Shaheed, a senior assistant secretary -- who were made OSDs during the BNP rule met the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

SC Bar urges caretaker govt to reconstitute EC, admin

UNB, Dhaka

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday urged the caretaker government to reconstitute the "controversial" Election Commission (EC) and change the entire administrative set up, as left by the four-party alliance government.

The appeal came from an emergency meeting of the SCBA executive committee with its

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Members of President's Guard Regiment have been deployed for the security of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in Dhaka.

Prayer Timing		
October 31		
	Azan	
Fajr	4-50	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-32	5-35
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation