

Arafat's Hebron HQ blown up: 15 'militants' killed

AFP, Hebron

Fifteen wanted Palestinian militants holed up inside the Hebron headquarters of the Palestinian Authority were killed when the Israeli army blew up the huge building after a four-day siege, Israeli military radio said yesterday.

However, army sources said no bodies had yet been found in the rubble of the three-storey complex, which had housed administrative and security offices.

The "moqataa" had been under attack since Tuesday, when the army took over Hebron, the last of seven West Bank cities occupied in the current Israeli military offensive.

Witnesses said the building had been nearly levelled by charges placed inside and that bulldozers then moved in to finish the job.

They said they heard two huge explosions, one at 1:00 a.m. local time and the other two hours later.

The blasts, using two tonnes of explosives according to the radio, were so powerful that houses and vehicles several hundred metres away were damaged, their windows blown in.

"There was this unbelievable noise, worse than an earthquake," said Hayat Maswadeh. "I hid my face under the blanket. When it was over I looked around and saw that my family was safe and sound, so I cried," she said.

Early Saturday, the Israeli bulldozers were continuing their work, clearing away the rubble, as some of the troops who had taken part in the siege left in

trucks, taking photographs of the remains before they went.

The Palestinians inside the building were said to have been local members of Tanzim, the Israeli term for fighters linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah organisation.

However a former Palestinian legislator who had entered the complex Friday in a bid to negotiate a surrender said he had found no one inside, although he had not visited every room of the huge structure.

An Israeli army spokesman said more than 20 Palestinians had surrendered after the siege began on Tuesday, "while other terrorists implicated in murderous anti-Israeli attacks remained entrenched inside."

The spokesman added that the army had authorised "senior Palestinian officials to make direct contacts with the terrorists in the building to encourage them to surrender. But the terrorists refused to give themselves up, and the army then decided to destroy the building in a controlled manner."

The destruction of the Hebron "moqataa" was the latest in a long line of Israeli attacks on the infrastructure of Arafat's government, which is now barely functioning.

Most of the attacks, including strikes by warplanes and helicopter gunships, have targeted buildings of the security services in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and other symbols of Arafat's rule.

Arafat's own "moqataa", his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah, has also been mostly destroyed, with only the building housing his own offices still standing in the remains of a huge compound.

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WEA honours 3 institutions and 6 women entrepreneurs

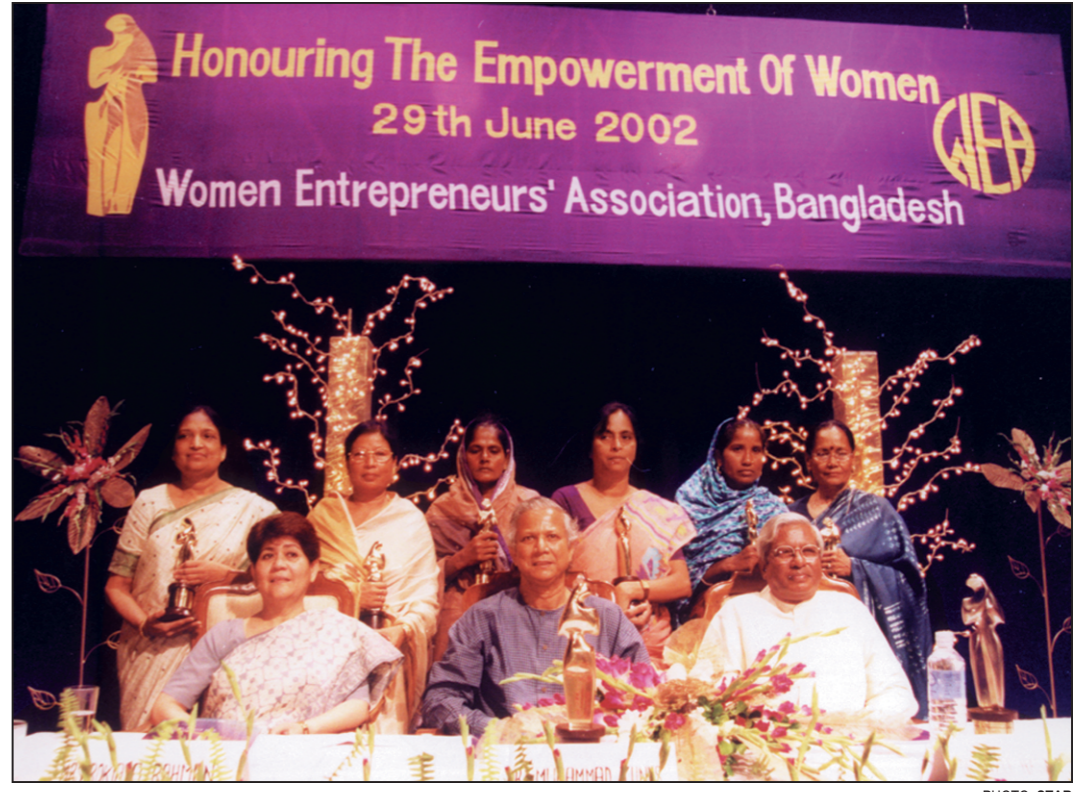
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Women Entrepreneurs' Association (WEA), a pioneering body in providing business support to develop women entrepreneurs, yesterday recognised the struggles and contributions of some distinguished women entrepreneurs and organisations for empowering women in the country.

In an award giving ceremony titled "Honouring the Empowerment of Women" in the city's Osmani Memorial Auditorium, the WEA honoured three institutions and six women entrepreneurs, both from rural and urban areas.

The WEA presented them with the WEA crest in recognition of their efforts in self-development and achieving their goals while setting an example in the arena of women empowerment and social development.

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Rokia A. Rahman, president of Women Entrepreneurs' Association (WEA), Bangladesh is seen with recipients of the WEA award including Dr Mohammad Yunus and Fazle Hasan Abed respectively on her left.

Schooldays over

ABDUL KADER

Rabeya Akhtar is the first girl of class seven at the Adamjee Girls School. But she does not know whether she would be able to attend school from today.

Rabeya is the daughter of a worker in the Adamjee Jute Mills (AJM), who would become jobless once the mill is closed down today. And as he would move out from the staff quarter, Rabeya's schooldays are over.

"I like the school and its teachers very much. I wanted to continue my education, but now I can't," said a tearful Rabeya.

Like her, the future of about 5,000 boys and girls, studying in three schools on the AJM premises, is now uncertain. As they came out of their schools, probably for the last time, some 50 girls of the Adamjee Girls High School lost their consciousness yesterday.

"Most of the students would not be able to attend school again as their fathers have become jobless,"

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PHOTO: STAR

Too much to take... Schoolgirls cry over one of their classmates who fainted after seeing her parents, workers at the Adamjee Jute Mills which closes today, packing up and the houses dismantled.

Pawns of politics

Curtain falls on AJM today

MONJUR MAHMUD

As the curtain finally falls on the Adamjee Jute Mills today, workers wonder how they were being used by the political powers as mere pawns in the game.

Thousands of Adamjee workers were forced to attend public meetings of political parties in power several times a month, with the management never taking a moment's pause to consider how much loss the largest jute mill in the world is going to incur if more than 60,000 workers do not work for a day.

The unions were politicised and the leaders made so powerful that

corruption, irregularities and criminal activities were just ignored by the authorities. In the end, the 100 per cent export-oriented industry was turned into a white elephant.

A number of workers and employees of the AJM became emotional with tears swelling in their eyes while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

"The political parties used us for their gains. Hardly a week went by without seeing 70 to 80 trucks of Adamjee workers attending political meetings in the city. And it meant no production for days together," said Jamal Uddin, who has been working in the jute mill since 1977.

Adamjee has now five unions. But according to the law, not more than three can exist in any organisation since a union has to have the support of at least 30 per cent of workers.

"My father was also a worker here and retired five years back. He asked me to work with sincerity and remain honest. I followed his advice," Jamal recalled with emotion.

"None of the governments were sincere in running the mill properly," said a top official of the AJM preferring anonymity. "Rather, they used it politically that put it on a

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Asma Begum 'absconding' from DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Begum, who 'lost' and later got back her newborn after giving birth to the baby Wednesday night, is now 'absconding' from the hospital.

Doctors at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday said Asma was not officially released and she has been missing since Friday night.

"We don't have any trace of Asma. She left no address with us," said an attending doctor at the maternity ward yesterday.

However, no case was filed with

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Mild tremor rocks Ctg twice

UNB, Dhaka

Mild tremors shook Chittagong and its adjoining areas on Friday night and yesterday.

Met office said a tremor of 4.29 magnitude lasted 24 seconds from 2.31 pm yesterday. Its epicenter was located 225 kms off the port city.

Another tremor shook the port city at 11:25 Friday night and lasted 18 seconds. Its epicenter was some 163 kms away from Chittagong.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 30		6-50 pm
July 1	5-14 am	

Prayer Timings		
June 30		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	6-59
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Regularisation Sr lawyers urge CJ not to swear 3 judges in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some senior lawyers yesterday urged the government not to appoint any new judges until the three judges recommended by the chief justice are regularised in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court.

A meeting of the lawyers held under the banner of 'Sammitto Ainjibi Samannoi Parishad' at the Supreme Court Bar Association expressed its deep concern as the three judges have not been regularised despite the chief justice's recommendation.

The meeting termed this a threat to the independence of the judiciary and urged the chief justice not to administer oath if the government wants to appoint any judge bypassing the regularisation of the three judges.

With Barrister Shawkat Ali in the chair, the meeting was also attended, among others, by

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Bangladesh to supply gas for Haldia power plant?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anticipating gas supply from Bangladesh, the Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) is going to sign an agreement for an 1100 MW gas fired thermal power plant in West Bengal, the BBC reported yesterday.

Quoting GAIL Regional Chief Dr UD Chhobi, the BBC reported that the West Bengal government was setting up the power plant with three units in Haladia. GAIL conceived the project as per technical experts' opinion on import of gas from Bangladesh.

Taking supply of gas from Bangladesh, GAIL is also planning marketing of gas to various fertiliser factories in Durgapur and Haladia of the West Bengal in the eastern part of India. Dr Chhobi said India is hopeful that its neighbour would provide gas.

Khulna Jubo League leader gunned down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Jubo League leader was gunned down by unidentified assailants at village Baliadanga under Batiaghata upazila of the district on Friday night.

According to police, the assailants kidnapped Asmat Hossain, 32, vice-president of Jubo League Baliadanga Unit, at about 11-30 pm. They took Asmat near the house of UP member Khalilur Rahman and shot him. He died on the spot.

The murder was a sequel to a dispute over possession of a shrimp enclosure, said Ziaur Rahman, convenor of Jubo League Bataghata Unit and nephew of the slain leader.

No case was filed in connection with the murder till 6 pm yesterday.

Two Koreas fight on Yellow Sea

ROK patrol boat sunk, 4 navy men killed

AFP, Seoul

Four South Korean soldiers were killed and one was missing Saturday in a clash between South Korean and North Korean navy vessels in the Yellow Sea, military authorities said.

The defence ministry said 22 other South Korean seamen were injured in a fierce exchange of gunfire near the Yeonpyeong island off the west coast.

A 156-tonne South Korean patrol boat manned by 27 soldiers was sunk, while a blazing North Korean boat trailing fumes of smoke was dragged back to its base, a ministry official said.

The clash occurred when two North Korean patrol boats, which were escorting fishing boats,

crossed the inter-Korean sea border, known as the northern limit line (NLL), around 10:25 a.m. (01:25 GMT).

North Korean navy vessels have intruded nine times into South Korean waters across the NLL this year but Saturday's clash marked the first exchange of fire between the two rivals in 2002.

In June 1999, a North Korean patrol boat was sunk by South Korean navy vessels in an exchange of fire near the area after it crossed the NLL while escorting North Korean fishing boats.

Scores of North Korean soldiers were believed to have been killed and nine South Korean sailors were injured in the 1999 clash.

Meanwhile, South Korean armed forces were put on high alert

Saturday after a battle between South and North Korean navy vessels in the Yellow Sea, officials said.

"Our entire armed forces were put on high alert along the border with North Korea," a spokesman for the joint chiefs of staff told AFP.

South Korean navy ships led by a 1,200-tonne frigate strengthened their surveillance in the Yellow Sea where the battle left four South Korean soldiers killed, one missing and 22 others injured, he said.

South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung held an emergency meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), which was attended by the prime minister, intelligence chief and unification, foreign and defence ministers, a presidential official said.

Bullet-hit Jubo Dal leader Kaikobad dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Morshed Alam Kaikobad, the Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader who was shot and critically injured at Motijheel on June 18, died at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in the city early yesterday morning.

He succumbed to his injuries after fighting for the past 10 days. Kaikobad contested the last general elections as an independent candidate from the Bholra-2 constituency.

Unidentified gunmen shot him in the head while he and his friend Asim Kumar Das were going to Sharif Mansion in the Motijheel commercial area by a rickshaw to meet his cousin Hafiz Ibrahim, the BNP lawmaker from the constituency. He was shot soon after he got down from the rickshaw in front of Sharif Mansion. His friend however ran to safety.

Kaikobad was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition and was operated at the intensive care unit (ICU). When his condition deteriorated further, he was shifted to the CMH. His condition however did not improve as a bullet was still inside his head. He succumbed to injuries at about 4:30am yesterday, after struggling for 10 days.

Sources said Kaikobad defected from the Awami League-backed Jubo

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Hotel owner shot dead by extortionists at Cox's Bazar

BSS, Cox's Bazar

A businessman was shot dead by a gang of armed miscreants at his hotel adjacent to the Central Bus Terminal here yesterday afternoon.

The victim was identified as Aktar Uddin, 30, son of Jamir Uddin and younger brother of Ratnapalong UP chairman Abbas Uddin.

Police quoting witnesses said a gang of seven entered Hotel Haider at about 4 pm and demanded toll from its owner Aktar.

As he refused to oblige, they sprayed bullets on him. He died on

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