

US soldier killed in Iraq drive-by shooting

AFP, Baghdad

One US soldier was killed yesterday and a second wounded in a drive-by shooting at a filling station in Baghdad, an American military spokesman and a witness said.

"One soldier was killed and one wounded. Both are in the 1st Armoured Division," Sergeant First Class Brian Thomas told the news agency. "They're treating it as a drive-by attack."

"The wounded soldier was evacuated to an army field hospital where he is listed in stable condition," he later added.

An Iraqi police officer had earlier told the news agency that two US soldiers were killed in the incident, which he described as a grenade attack, in Dura, on the southern fringes of the capital.

A manager at the Dura filling station confirmed the US account of a drive-by shooting.

"A car slowly approached and fired at least five bullets at them and then sped away," Ayad Victor said.

"I believe one of the soldiers was killed because he was shot in the throat. Another was wounded, shot in the neck and hand," he added.

Thomas later added that military police believed a separate attacker had approached on foot.

An AFP photographer at the scene in Dura saw a number of US military vehicles arrive to remove two soldiers. The Iraqi policeman said both were dead.

The photographer was then detained by US forces who held his press pass and confiscated his camera, preventing him from taking photographs of the scene for one

hour.

The latest death brings to 51 the number of US troops killed since President George W. Bush declared the war in Iraq effectively over on May 1, according to an AFP count from US military statements.

Fifteen of those were killed in attacks and the rest in accidents.

Washington report adds: US forces raided two farmhouses near

the Iraqi town of Tikrit yesterday, seizing millions of dollars in cash and about 20 people associated with members of the former regime's special security services, including a bodyguard of Saddam Hussein, a US commander said.

Major General Ray Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division, said the raids were continuing at two other locations in the

area where about 30 suspected Special Republican Guard forces were cornered by US forces.

Forces guarding the two farms outside Tikrit put up no resistance, he said in a video conference from Baghdad with Pentagon reporters.

"We detained 15 to 20 individuals associated with Saddam's special security forces," he said. One of the

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PHOTO: AFP

US troops guard the entrance of the US administration offices in Baghdad as a crowd of angry protesters demonstrate in front of them yesterday. US troops fired with live rounds, killing one Iraqi and wounding two.

More protests against SQ Chy's defamation suit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protests against the defamation suit filed by Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury against editors of two national dailies continued to pour in.

Teachers, politicians and students yesterday said filing of a case against editors of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo was an attempt to suppress freedom of press and speech.

Our RU Correspondent reports: Seventy-eight teachers of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday demanded immediate withdrawal of the defamation suit filed by SQ Chowdhury.

In a joint statement, they expressed resentment and deep

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WB, IMF boards meet today, tomorrow to decide \$1b loans

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Loan proposals worth over \$1 billion will be placed at the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) board meetings in Washington today and tomorrow.

The WB board today discusses three projects in addition to its \$300 million Bangladesh Development Support programme. The projects are the Telecommunications Technical Assistance Project (\$9.12 million), the Rural Transport Improvement Project (\$190 million) and the Central Bank Strengthening

Project (\$37 million).

The IMF board meeting tomorrow will consider the anti-poverty loan against Bangladesh's quota of 533 special drawing rights (SDR). Bangladesh could get a highest of \$590 million against the quota and the first tranche of the seven-tranche loan is likely to be disbursed this month.

Regarding the Central Bank Strengthening Project, the WB has observed that the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has traditionally had little control over its staff unions, which are politicised and whose activities are not always compatible with the BB's institutional

interests.

"The unions' influence on personnel policies, including promotions and transfers, is excessive and clearly harmful to the BB as an institution," the WB said. "The unions have been able to get away with extremely disruptive activities because of political support from outside BB and also because of the BB's own weaknesses and lack of autonomy."

The Bangladesh Development Support funds would be disbursed this month, according to a World Bank source. The government would use the funds to support balance of payment.

No slot for Hasina in Powell's itinerary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The itinerary of US Secretary of State Colin Powell does not include any meeting with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, sources said.

According to some unconfirmed reports, Powell was supposed to meet Hasina during his half-day visit in Dhaka, but it has been cancelled since the US embassy will remain shut due to the Awami League-called hartal today.

Powell will meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan. He might hold a brief press conference, but it was yet to be finalised till last evening.

Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star that there was no scheduled meeting between Powell and Hasina although there were talks about it.

"The chances of this meeting are almost nil as no slot has been fixed till this evening," he said last night.

3 BRTC buses, garbage truck, taxicab set on fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three state-owned buses, one garbage container truck and one taxicab were set on fire by unidentified miscreants yesterday.

Some unruly people set ablaze a single-decker bus of the Bangladesh Roads and Transport Corporation (BRTC) at the Moghbazaar intersection at around 8:00pm.

At the Pallabi bus stand, some unidentified youths set afire a garbage truck of the Dhaka City Corporation at 7:00pm.

One hour before the incident, miscreants hurled a petrol bomb at a double-decker bus at the same place. However, no injury was reported.

At the Bangla Motor crossing, a group of youths hurled a petrol bomb at a Volvo double-decker bus at around 6:00am, injuring three passengers.

Late in the evening, a BRTC bus came under fire-attack near the Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani Stadium at Gulistan.

At around 10:30 last night, another group of youths set afire a BRTC Volvo bus at Abdullapur in Tongi. The BRTC authorities said the repair cost of the expensive bus would be around Tk 30 lakh.

At Banani Bazar yesterday, a group of miscreants set a taxicab on fire at around 9:00pm.

On Tuesday night, some unruly people also set ablaze two double-decker buses of the BRTC.

The BRTC believes that pro-hartal activists might have been involved in the act.

Liakat Sikder, president of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), which called the today's half-day hartal, however denied any involve

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8 policemen suspended in Ctg kidnap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Eight police personnel, including an inspector of the district Special Branch, were suspended here yesterday for picking up two businessmen and demanding Tk 5 lakh for their release.

The two-member committee formed to investigate the incident that took place on Monday night submitted its report to the higher authorities yesterday afternoon. The report termed the behaviour of Police Inspector TP Aung and his team 'unacceptable' and recommended departmental action in addition to suspension of the police personnel.

Naik Abdur Rahim, constables Mahbub, Aminul Haq, Tajul Islam, Atiq Ullah, Salahuddin and Shafiqul Islam are the seven others under suspension.

Inspector TP Aung and his team picked up businessman Abu Hussein alias Abu Saadagor and

his son Abul Kashem of Madina Store at Tamakumondi Lane of Reazuddin Bazar under the Kotwali Police Station at around 11:30 pm on Monday.

The inspector took the businessmen to the district police super's (SP) office reportedly in his bid to realise the demanded toll of Tk 10 lakh (later reduced to Tk 5 lakh) that he was refused earlier.

As the news spread, the businessmen of Tamakumondi Lane laid a siege to the SP's office at Sholoshohor and staged demonstrations until the abducted businessmen were released at around 1:30 am (Tuesday).

Meanwhile, the accused inspector TP Aung defended himself saying he brought the businessmen to the SP's office to interrogate them about a smuggling case filed with the Chandoanah Police Station last year.

Key alternate health plan set to miss take-off deadline

HPSP extends by six months

NAIMUL HAQ

The Tk 9,000-crore Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPP) is not taking off as per plan on July 1 as it lies unapproved with the Project Implementation Paper (PIP) of the programme yet to be ready.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare spent over Tk 12 core to prepare the three-year programme by this month but failed to do so, sources said.

This forces the government to extend the five-year Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP) by six months from July 1. The HPSP expires on June 30.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the extension of the HPSP on Sunday.

The government and the development partners had earlier set the launch of the HNPP on July 1.

The prime minister had asked the health ministry on January 29 this year to complete all preparations to launch it in time.

The HNPP mainly aims to reduce maternal mortality, fertility rate, malnutrition, infant and under-five mortality, provide close-to-client facilities, improve access to and quality of services at the secondary and tertiary hospitals and control

communicable diseases.

Earlier in September last year, the ministry hired four consultants including an expatriate for six months to prepare the PIP. The three local consultants drew a monthly salary of Tk 1.5 lakh, Tk 80,000 and Tk 50,000 respectively. The expatriate consultant, a nutrition expert at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Control, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), pocketed about Tk 3 lakh a month.

Failing to do their job in time, the consultants had prepared an 'alternative PIP', which the development partners rejected, saying it had no specific objectives. They also said they would not finance the HNPP if it lacked specific plans and strategy, a top health ministry official said.

The health ministry had also initiated a number of pilot studies at an estimated cost of Tk 12 crore to prepare the HNPP.

The studies include recycling of user-fee, voucher schemes, cash transfers, community health insurance, expenditure tracking, mapping out how and to what extent 'informal fees' hinder access to services for women and the poor, public and non-public healthcare providers' role in healthcare delivery system.

None of the studies has been completed till now.



Abed Khan Bhorer Kagoj Editor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abed Khan, famous columnist and journalist has joined Dainik Bhorer Kagoj as Editor replacing Benzir Ahmed, the acting Editor.

Lately, he was chief of news section of Ekushey Television since its inception.

He started his career as a journalist in 1962 with now defunct Dainik Jehad after graduating from Dhaka University. Then he worked for Dainik Sangbad.

Later he joined Dainik Ittefaq as a sub-editor and subsequently worked as shift-in-charge, senior reporter and chief reporter for the daily. He was appointed assistant editor in 1978. He started writing columns since then and was acting as a member of editors' panel.

In 1995, he resigned from Dainik Ittefaq and started working as a

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Muggers loot Tk 8.5 lakh from private co employee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers reportedly robbed an employee of a private company of Tk 8.5 lakh at Uttara sector 13 yesterday.

Shawkatul Islam, an employee of Global Plates Services Limited, drew the money from Standard Chartered Bank at Karwan Bazar and started for his office at Uttara in a car.

As soon as it reached Uttara sector-13 at 3:30pm, four armed men on two motor bikes stopped the car.

The gang beat up Islam and took away the bag containing the money.

Islam filed a case with the Uttara Police Station. Police failed to arrest the criminals or recover the money till 10pm last night.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 19		6-48 pm
June 20	5-11 am	
Prayer Timings		
June 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-53	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

6 Bandarban AL activists held after clash with BNP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Six Awami League activists were arrested in the town on Tuesday following a clash with BNP men.

Witnesses said, the clash took place over control of Rickshaw Samik League office, leaving eight, including the secretary of BNP district unit injured.

Additional police have been deployed in the town.

Police nabbed the AL activists from different areas of the town after filing of three cases by district BNP with Bandarban police against 27 AL leaders and activists.

Local Awami League leaders alleged that police refused to take their case, but police denied the allegation.

The arrestees were produce before a court here the same day. The court rejected the bail petition and sent them to jail hajat.

Awami League brought out a procession in the town yesterday demanding withdrawal of the cases and release its six activists.



PHOTO: STAR

Supreme Court lawyers form a human chain on the High Court premises yesterday to press home their six-point demand.

Police, politicians on PBCP's hitlist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Political extremists in the south-western districts have put four police officers and seven political leaders of Jessore on their latest hitlist.

Moreover, the extremists have demanded huge amounts of money of some affluent people in Mongla and issued death threats on them if they failed to oblige them. The outlawed Purb Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) has circulated leaflets in Jessore and Mongla, identifying 11 people as 'class enemies.'

PBCP armed cadres Rony and Pir Mohammad, arrested on June 15 by Abhoynagar police, disclosed during interrogation the names of the 11 persons on the hitlist. According to their confessional statement, the targets are sub-inspectors (SI) of police Ohiduzzaman, Ainul Huq and Abdul Aziz of the Jessore Kotwali Police Station (PS), and SI

Mosaddeque Ali of Monirampur PS.

The seven others are three leaders of the ruling and opposition parties, businessmen Asad Sarker and Asaduzzaman of Abhoynagar, Khokon of Monirampur and Azad of Keshabpur upazila. Police did not disclose the names of three targeted political leaders.

Leaflets seized by police and the confessional statement of the PBCP armed cadres have created panic in Jessore police and political circles. A senior officer of Jessore district police said they are carefully examining the confessional statement of the arrested outlaws.

Meanwhile, police stations in Bagerhat district have been put on alert following a tip-off that fugitive leader of the PBCP Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan is hiding somewhere in the district along with four groups of armed cadres to carry out criminal activities.

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