



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



COMMITTED TO People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XIII No.166

DHAKA SATURDAY JULY 5, 2003

ASHAR 21, 1410 BS

ZAMADUII- AWAL 4, 1424 HIRI

16 PAGES PRICE: Tk 7.00

www.thedailystar.net

Suicide bombing in Quetta mosque kills 44, injures 65

Indefinite curfew clamped to quell violence

AFP, Quetta

At least 44 people were killed and 65 injured in a suicide bombing at a Shiite Muslim mosque in the south-western Pakistani city of Quetta yesterday, sparking riots that forced the government to impose an indefinite curfew.

Armed policemen and paramilitary troops spread out in the city, as local administration declared the curfew asking people to remain indoors, officials and witnesses said.

Curfew has been clamped down in Quetta and paramilitary and police have been deployed to control the rioting, Brigadier Javed Cheema, head of the interior ministry's National Crises Management Cell, told AFP.

Asked if the security forces had been given orders to shoot rioters on sight, Cheema said it was "normal procedure in a curfew situation."

The attack took place during Friday prayers.

Reuters adds: At least one suicide bomber blew himself up in the mosque in the centre of the city.

A senior city official in Quetta

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Troops patrol Quetta streets to quell violence after a suicide attack inside a Shi'ite mosque killed at least 44 people and injured 65 others yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Another 500 bullets recovered in Kahalu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police and paramilitary BDR in a joint raid yesterday recovered some 500 bullets from a drain at Jogarpara village in Kahalu in Bogra district.

Kahalu thana Officer-in-Charge Wahidul Islam led the drive at about 6:45pm.

With this latest haul, a total of 93,642 bullets and at least 174 kg of explosives have been seized in Bogra, said a UNB report quoting local police sources.

On June 27, police recovered 62,112 bullets of Chinese rifle and 120 kilograms of explosives, the biggest ever haul of ammunition and explosives, from an abandoned truck and from the precinct of a house at Jogarpara village of Kahalu thana in Bogra.

On July 1, another 26,500 bullets and 48 kg of explosives were recovered from Jogarpara and Sardarpara areas of Kahalu upazila in Bogra

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Bodies of Khulna cops found: 47 picked up for quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bodies of the slain policemen of Rupsha police station were recovered from the Atharobaki river yesterday.

Sub-inspector (SI) Shamsul Haq and Havildar Abu Baker were gunned down by the cadres of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) at Bamandanga Bazar at around 10:30 am on Thursday.

Police also recovered the motorcycle of the slain SI from Bernal village in Kalia upazila of Narail yesterday.

Law enforcers have so far picked up 47 people from Terokhada, Rupsha and Fakirhat for quizzing.

With the Thursday killing, 17 policemen have been killed and 28 injured in armed attacks by outlaws in the Khulna division since July 2002.

The policemen killed by outlaws are Constables Fazlu, 53, and Motaleb, 50, of Itagacha police camp under Sathkira Sadar Police Station; Sergeant Ariful Islam, Constables

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Unocal mulls international consortium for gas export

SHARIEF KHAN

US oil company Unocal is now examining the idea to develop an international gas consortium involving other oil companies and donors-lenders to make its gas export proposal more politically acceptable.

A top Unocal official told The Daily Star that the company has been working on this idea for the last few months to overcome barriers to export of gas. The idea is to develop a 20-year plan that would have to be acceptable to all shades of political opinion to sustain any long term change of government and policies.

He said the consortium would consist of Unocal as 25 per cent stakeholder, Petrobangla 25 per cent, other oil companies in Bangladesh Shell, Chevron, Tullow

etc., 25 per cent and financiers like the International Finance Corporation (IFC) or the Asian Development Bank (ADB) the rest.

The consortium may develop the gas pipeline system, strike the export agreement and ensure gas supplies at the border point from where an exclusively Indian consortium would receive the gas.

He admitted that there was political risk in the project as during the 20-year project life, there would be at least four elections and subsequent new governments in Bangladesh and India. A consortium was a solid idea to deal with political changes over a long time.

"The idea is different from Unocal's original export proposal," the official said, "we believe (if it is formed) this consortium would protect the export project from

political risks." He added anyone who would try to hurt the consortium would hurt many nations including Bangladesh, thus giving it a solid foundation.

Explaining how this consortium would supplement the existing Unocal proposal for exporting gas, the Unocal official noted that Unocal would develop gas (from Bibiyana gas field) and sell that to Petrobangla and Petrobangla would take it to the border. "The Gas Transmission Company Ltd (of Petrobangla) and the ADB can jointly finance and develop this pipeline and the consortium would handle export," he elaborated.

The idea of the consortium, he believes, would appeal to other oil companies operating in Bangladesh as this would set up the basic pipe-

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AL demands judicial, parliamentary probe into ammo haul

SHAMEEM MAHMUD, back from Bogra

The main opposition Awami League (AL) has demanded a judicial inquiry and a parliamentary probe into the biggest ever ammunition and explosives haul at Kahalu in Bogra.

There must be a judicial inquiry and a parliamentary committee comprising lawmakers of all the parties should be formed to investigate the matter, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid told newsmen at Kahalu after visiting the spot yesterday.

Hamid led an AL delegation that included party lawmaker Col. (retd) Faruk Khan, former chief of army staff General (retd) Mustafizur Rahman, Col (retd) Saqlaen and local leaders of the party. They talked to villagers and also visited the Dupchachia Police Station.

Dismissing government accusation of his party's involvement in illegal possession of the ammunition and explosives, he said, "There is no scope for viewing the matter with a political motive as it poses a threat to security of the country."

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Minister's 'no' to AL demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday said it would not launch any judicial or parliamentary investigation into the ammunition and explosives haul in Bogra, demanded by the Awami League (AL).

Talking to the BBC last night, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutuzzaman Babar dismissed the allegation of Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, saying no leader or activist of the AL was arrested in connection with the seizure purposely.

"A case has been filed against a local AL leader as the bullets and explosives were recovered from near his home," he said.

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Verdict in Ratna Murder Case today

BSS, Dhaka

The Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 will pronounce the verdict in the Ratna Murder Case here today.

Judge Shahed Nooruddin will deliver the judgement at 12:30pm, court sources told BSS here yesterday.

The body of Ratna, 5, daughter of Enamul Khan, was recovered on August 10 last year from an under-construction building at South Manda under Sabujbag police station in the city, police quoting local people said.

Ratna had gone missing the day before following a quarrel between

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US troops kill eleven Iraqis in ambush

American soldier shot dead, 19 hurt in 2 attacks

AFP, Baghdad

US troops killed 11 Iraqis who attempted to ambush a patrol north of Baghdad yesterday, a US military spokesman said, adding that there were no US casualties.

"The attackers attempted to engage the patrol with small arms and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades). They were all killed when the patrol returned fire," Specialist

Giovanni Lorente told the news agency.

The attack occurred near Balad, around 75 kilometres north of the capital early yesterday, he added.

A mortar attack on a US base in the area late Thursday left 16 US troops wounded, a military spokesman said earlier.

Earlier one US soldier was shot and killed in Baghdad overnight, while 19 others were wounded in a

mortar attack near the town of Balad, north of the Iraqi capital, US army spokesmen said yesterday.

"There was a mortar attack inside or near the US base," near Balad, around 75 kilometres north of Baghdad, Specialist Giovanni Lorente said. "Initial reports suggest that 19 US soldiers were wounded."

Their condition was not known. A separate shooting claimed the

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