

US troops kill six Iraqis in Tikrit

AFP, Tikrit

Five Iraqi men and a child were killed by US gunfire early yesterday in a street market in the town of Tikrit, the director of the main hospital in Saddam Hussein's hometown north of Baghdad told the news agency.

However, a US military spokesman disputed the account of locals, saying only two arms dealers had been killed and another two wounded.

Dr. Salah al-Dulaimi told AFP US soldiers opened fire at five arms dealers who were test-firing Kalashnikov assault rifles for cus-

tomers at 8:30am local time, killing them.

A child who was in the market-place of the town, 175 kilometers north of Baghdad, was also fatally shot, and a woman was wounded, he said.

But Lieutenant Colonel Bill MacDonald, of the 4th Infantry Division, assigned to Tikrit, gave a different version of events.

"Soldiers of 4th ID sent out an observation patrol to monitor a location where suspected former regime loyalists were trafficking illegal arms. At 7:30am a team observed four men illegally trafficking weapons. The team engaged

the four men, two were wounded, two were killed," MacDonald said.

The 4th ID has scoured the countryside around Tikrit as it hopes to disable the network of supporters of Saddam, Iraq's former president who disappeared on April 9 when Baghdad fell to US forces and has a 25-million-dollar bounty on his head.

A US soldier died after suffering a gunshot wound while on guard duty in Baghdad, the US military said yesterday, but it declined to say whether he was killed in a hostile attack.

"The incident is under investiga-

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PHOTO: STAR

Family members of Bijoy Biswas sift through the ruins in the hope of retrieving valuables after a fire reduced to ashes their house at Batua village in Chittagong yesterday. The blaze burnt to death two women - Supta, 20, newlywed wife of Bijoy (right) and his sister Tinku, 18. Mystery shrouds the fire as Bijoy had a strained relationship with his father-in-law over his marriage.



PHOTO: STAR

DRIFTING IN SAFETY. Elderly indigenous man Jibon Chakma drifts on a bamboo raft in the Karnaphuli river ever since his hilltop house was flattened by an earthquake on July 27.

Quake fear still stalks people in Ctg zone

OUR CORRESPONDENT,*Rangamati*

A spectre of death and destruction haunts the people of Chittagong region in the wake of a moderate tremor on July 27, but the government appears sluggish to study the damage caused by the quake to prepare for post-disaster management.

The subterranean shudder killed at least two people, injured 25, damaged about 500 houses and government buildings and triggered a train of aftershocks to strike horror into the people.

Meanwhile, disparate views by experts from different fields in the aftermath of the quake have unnerved the people in the region, especially in Rangamati hill district hit hard by the July 27 quake.

Some experts said there was no threat of a serious quake anytime soon, while others said a serious disaster

awaited the region.

The July 27 quake was the latest in a series of over 100 quakes that jolted the region in the past three and a half years and the strongest since 1997.

Experts from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), Chittagong University, Chittagong Engineering University, Weather Department and Geological Survey Department said the region was perched on a seismic fault line that stretched deep from Kalabuia in Barkal to Maheshkhali island.

Dr Aftab, however, claimed that he went to the quake-hit region for his own research purposes with the help of an organisation.

The people of Rangamati expressed utter frustration over no definite government move to gauge the intensity with which quakes can hit them.

"We are living under the shadow of tremor horror, but the government is sitting on its hand with complete indifference to the threat," said a college teacher, requesting anonymity.

The fault line posed a serious threat to the region, some experts said.

But the special committee formed by the government to analyse the quake damage could not be traced.

Asked by telephone yesterday whether the committee at all existed, Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati Dr Zafar Ahmed Khan said: "I'm not sure."

He said a team of experts arrived

after he had written to the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs requesting investigation into quake threats.

The team included Relief and Disaster Management Bureau Director General Saiful Islam, Dr Aftab Alam Khan and two experts from the Geological Survey Bureau.

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Derailed

Train service with northern dists disrupted for 5 hours

BSS, Jamalpur

Train service between Dhaka and northern districts was disrupted for five hours from 12:15 pm yesterday when five bogies of a train derailed at Nurundi Railway Station in Jamalpur.

Railway sources said the bogies of a Dewanganj-bound goods train coming from Chittagong derailed at the railway station, some 20 kms away from the district town.

However, a relief train from Mymensingh rushed to the spot and restored the train communications.

Schoolgirl raped in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A schoolgirl was raped at village Kantinagar in Kumarkhali upazila in the district Thursday evening.

According to police, Rashedul Islam went to a neighbour's house at about 7pm and raped his 10-year-old daughter. The victim, a student of class five of Haripur Primary School, was alone at the time.

Hearing scream of the victim, neighbours rushed to the spot and rescued the girl, but the culprit managed to flee.

A case was filed against Rashedul with Sadar Police Station. Police could not arrest the rapist till filing of this report yesterday evening.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 09		6:37 pm
Aug 10	5:32 am	

Prayer Timings

August 9

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:30	5:00
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:45	6:50
Esha	8:15	8:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Landline phones in private sector unlikely this year

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is unlikely to allow new telecoms operators to run fixed line networks in the private sector this year due to red tape.

The BTRC did not float either tender or request for proposal (RFP) as it has to go through a time-consuming procedure to work out licensing criteria, sources said. The body was scheduled to float tender or RFP by August this year.

The delay will cause potential telephone subscribers to suffer due to the poor capacity of the fixed line monopoly Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB).

Currently about 1.75 lakh applications are pending with the BTTB for fixed phones, the demand for which shot up after the slashing of installation charge by 45 per cent.

The BTRC now plans to get feedback from people and stakeholders in the sector before awarding the licence through a procedure that may take a couple of months to complete.

Officials at the BTRC said a set of criteria is needed to be finalised to ensure transparent and equitable licence issuance.

The key features of the criteria will be the applicant's financial capacity, availability of qualified manpower and organisational experience, sources said.

Conditions such as the size of the licencing area, fees/charges, minimum exchange capacity, roll out obligations, interconnection and related charges and universal service obligation (USO) will be specified as licencing obligations.

The BTRC has invited views on licensing new fixed line telecoms

operators from the public and telephone subscribers, stakeholders, experts, potential investors, development partners, interested research and dialogue institutions and the press.

The

Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC), a state-owned consultancy firm, has been engaged to assist the BTRC in licensing new public switching telephone network (PSTN) operators in the private sector.

A

consultation paper on the issue has been posted at the IIFC website.

"

The

aim

of the national-level consultation is to find out what people want to have before developing and implementing an appropriate licensing methodology for new PSTN operators in Bangladesh," a senior consultant of the IIFC told The Daily Star.

The equity of foreign investors will be in accordance with the provisions made by the government. Currently, 100 per cent foreign equity is allowed.

Existing operators in Bangladesh have been granted licence terms for 25-30 years.

For new fixed lines, an initial licence term may be for 15 years with provision for a five-year extension.

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