

Makkah uplift ordered

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would "draw the conclusions to revise the organisation of the pilgrimage and improve" services offered to "the guests of God".

Such projects are not new and at the end of 1991, Saudi government planners approved the building of a controversial residential and shopping center on the site of an Ottoman fort at Makkah.

It was just one of several megaschemes underway to improve the holy city.

The Makkah development plan, to be completed over several years, will enable the area to accommodate more than 1.2 million people, compared with under half a million today.

The plan also envisages an increase in car-parking capacity from today's 585 spaces to a massive 45,000 vehicles, and to expand the pedestrian area from 6,000 square meters to 10,000 square meters.

Traditional souks around the Grand Mosque are today scattered over an area of 180,000 square meters. Ultra-modern malls and markets are planned to cover 660,000 square meters.

One of the major projects is the six-billion-rial (1.6-billion-dollar) Omar mountain, overlooking the Mosque. Several hundred old buildings are due to be cleared.

Some 120 residential towers, each 20 storeys high, with a total capacity for 100,000 people are planned for the 160,000-square-meter mountain, named after the second Caliph in Islam, Omar bin Al-Khattab.

Under another scheme a multi-level residential and shopping center

will rise from the site of the old Ajyad Hospital, located on the very edge of the Mosque. A modern hospital will also be built as part of the center.

HAJJ'A GREAT SUCCESS'

The Hajj season was a "great success" in every possible way, Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz said yesterday, adding that the 251 people trampled to death during the stoning of the devil ritual "met their fate".

"I want to congratulate you on your great achievement ... all the security, safety and traffic plans were carried out according to the highest standards and those who say otherwise are ungrateful or hate this country," Prince Nayef told the men charged with the security of the annual pilgrimage to Makkah, the SPA reported.

He said the mostly Asian pilgrims who perished Sunday as they pressed to throw stones at three pillars representing Satan in the valley of Mina near Makkah "met their fate because their place and time of death has been decided the moment they were born."

But despite the fatalism, Nayef said some of the pilgrims who died in the tragedy were partly to blame for losing their cool.

"Our pilgrim brethren should have been, or we would have hoped that they would be, calm and moved slowly to respect those who fainted or fell to the ground dying and not to trample on them," said Nayef, who also heads the Supreme Hajj Council.

Chief Justice Syed JR. Mudassir Husain, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, ministers and judges of the supreme court attended the main Eid congregation. Moulana Obaidul Huq, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, conducted the prayers.

President Iajuddin hosted a reception at the Bangabhaban for diplomats and elite of the city on the occasion.

Dean of the diplomatic corps Shaista Zarab, ambassadors and high commissioners of different countries in Bangladesh and chiefs of international agencies, among others, attended the reception.

The speaker, the chief justice, lawmakers and leaders of political parties also attended the function.

The guests included vice-chancellors of universities, academics, recipients of national awards, freedom fighters, journalists, litterateurs, artists, business leaders, religious personalities and high civil and military officials.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanged Eid greetings with people of all walks of life at her Hare Road office.

Ministers, MPs, leaders of the ruling four-party alliance, ambassadors and senior civil and military officials also came there.

Later, the prime minister visited the mazar of president Ziaur Rahman and laid wreaths. His family members and colleagues were present.

Amawi League President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina exchanged Eid greetings with a cross-section of people and diplomats at her Dhanmondi office.

Pabna JP leader

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granted him bail in the case.

Critically injured Kadar was admitted to the Combined Military Hospital.

Arzu's body was brought to his Gopalpur residence in Pabna on Monday. He was later buried at Pabna Sadar graveyard.

Hunt for Iraq's Arbil

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Arbil, 350 kilometres (220 miles) north of Baghdad, have also said the attacks could be the work of the extremist Ansar-al-Islam.

The radical group, which controlled an enclave of northeast Iraq before being crushed by US forces at the end of March, is suspected of links to Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network.

Meanwhile, the bloody anti-US insurgency continued Tuesday as one American soldier was killed and another injured by a homemade bomb near Hawza, south of Baghdad as they were combing the area for explosives.

The latest death brings to 252 the number of US soldiers killed in the 10-month insurgency battering Iraq since US President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat on May 1.

MOURNERS FILL STREETS

Thousands of mourners gathered Tuesday in the Kurdish city of Arbil to pay last respects to the victims of twin suicide bombings, as the death toll climbed to 100, making the attacks the deadliest yet in post-war Iraq.

Grief and fear were evident across the city, as the funeral corteges for senior political leaders moved silently past shuttered shops and deserted side streets.

Officials from the local interior ministry, quoted by a television station run by the KDP, said late Tuesday the death toll had climbed to 100, while US officials said 247 people were injured.

Security has since stepped up in Arbil, 350 kilometres (220 miles) north of Baghdad, with new checkpoints established across the usually untroubled citadel city.

Some 4,000 people gathered for the funerals of Mahdi Koshnaw, a

Violence

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All's house and threatened him with death, the relatives alleged.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reports: On the Eid day, local hoodlums went from house to house at Chashara, Galachipa, Madair, Nandipara, Amlapara, Missionpara, Khanpur, Islami, Bholai, Kashipur in the town and at Kadamtoli, Adami and Mijmij in Siddhiganj. They asked the people to sell the rawhides of their sacrificial animals at Tk 500 per piece to them and threatened of dire consequence if anyone refused to do so.

Such groups that undertook the moneymaking venture also locked into clashes in almost all of the aforesaid areas.

That day, after buying 200 rawhides from Narayanganj, a hide-trader named Bachchu was returning to Keraniganj by a trolley. A group of local hoodlums swooped on them at Aliganj on the Buriganga and hijacked the trolley to Kandapara in Keraniganj. Snatching Tk 90,000 from Bachchu, the assailants pushed him into the river and went away with the hides.

In another incident, members of a gang stabbed hide-trader Jahirul Haq at Sheharchar in Fautilla and looted the rawhides he had purchased.

Joint survey

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the ministry yesterday.

The meeting was told that Tk 400 crore has been earmarked for construction of the 91-kilometre-long road from Ramu to Bucidong of Myanmar. The meeting was further informed that in future Dhaka-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar-Yangon highway would get importance as part of the Asian Highway.

The minister said the government has attached great importance to the construction of the road to establish direct link with Southeast Asian countries including Yangon, Thailand and China and to utilise the huge trade potentials in the region.

Locals recovered another body from the river Monday afternoon, whose identity could not be known till yesterday, while the fourth passenger is still missing, police said.

Niazi dead

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from captivity in 1974 and was held in detention by the army for about a year. After his release, Niazi became a strongest critic of the policies of the Pakistan army and made an unsuccessful bid to enter politics. After his retirement from public life, he published a book Betrayal of East Pakistan in 1998 in which he outlined his version of events that lead to the division of Pakistan. Niazi is survived by two sons and three daughters.

Daughter

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involvement of the two groups who also enjoyed the night as projection offices in the village of two rival BNP chairman candidates in the upcoming municipal election, he added.

After Usha's autopsy, Dr Emdadur Rahman, head of the forensic department of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, said two or more adults committed the rape and her sexual organ was 'violently ruptured' causing huge bleeding.

Usha took her dinner at around 8.30pm and went out to watch television in a neighbour's house. At 9.00pm, she called her friend Lovely, but went missing since she started for home after Lovely's parents refused to let her go with Usha at the night.

"I rushed to the field hearing of a dead body from a satal woman and found my daughter was lying stripped off and her blood-stained, torn cloths were found around her body," said her father Nazrul.

Sub-Inspector Omar Faruk of Kakonhat police investigation centre said there was blood and signs of human bite on Usha's face and breasts and many scratch marks of nails were found between her head and thighs.

The victim's father Nazrul filed a case under the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act of 2000 with Kakonhat Police Investigation Centre accusing one.

Police arrested two youths on suspicion. They are Moslem Uddin, 15, son of Mohzahar Uddin and Zamui Hossain, 14, son of Ayub Hossain of the same village.

The arrestees were placed before a magistrate's court yesterday and police sought five day's remand against them. The court will hear on the remand prayer today.

Inferno

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have been doused much earlier had the fire brigade reached the spot in time.

The fire brigade sources however could not specify the damage although preliminary estimates put it at around Tk 5 crore. They claimed that they rushed to the spot immediate after receiving the information.

The shopkeepers on the ground floor first noticed the fire and informed Tejgaon fire service and Tejgaon Police Station about the flames.

Four fire brigade vehicles rushed to the spot immediately after getting the news of fire.

The number of shops on the first floor of the market is around 350 and one third of them on the northern side was affected most, said an office-bearer of Karwan Bazar Wholesale Shop Owners Association.

Tk 10 to 15 lakh worth of goods were there in each shop, the association leaders said.

"I have three shops on the (first) floor and I think two of them were gutted by the fire damaging at least Tk 20 lakh worth of goods," said Polash Chowdhury, a shop owner standing on the road near the fire.

Police cordoned off the area to protect the market from criminals.

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Pak scientist seeks

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apologises to a traumatised nation," Khan said on Pakistan Television, speaking in English. "I also wish to clarify that there was never ever any kind of authorisation for these activities by the government."

Khan also asked for clemency from President Pervez Musharraf, the government said.

Musharraf is believed to be considering whether to prosecute the scientist, revered at home for developing Pakistan's atomic bomb.

"Dr A.Q. Khan submitted before the President that he accepts full responsibility for all the proliferation activities, which were conducted by him during the period in which he was at the helm of affairs of Khan Research Laboratories," the government said in a statement.

Khan headed KRL, the country's main nuclear research organisation, until 2001.

"Dr Khan has submitted his mercy petition to the president and requested for clemency, in view of his services to national security," the statement added.

Intelligence sources said Khan had

called the meeting in a last-ditch bid to strike a deal and avoid prosecution.

Many Pakistanis and Western diplomats feel that Khan has been treated as a scapegoat, and that he could not have acted as he did without the knowledge of senior military officials.

Pakistan's military has strongly denied remarks attributed to a friend of Khan saying the scientist had told investigators Musharraf was among those who knew he had given nuclear know-how to North Korea in the 1990s.

In his first public remarks since an investigation into the nuclear leaks by Pakistan was launched over two months ago, Khan told state-run Pakistan Television he had requested a statement.

"The president was extremely kind and understanding. We discussed this ongoing affair, the international campaign against Pakistan about nuclear matters," he said.

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Robbers loot

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Equally shocked was the owner of Mahanagar Jeweller's, Tarak Gupta, who said: "They took Bablu's brother Hasan Monsur, also co-owner of the resort hotel, a unit of Guide Tours Limited in Dhaka.

The abduction underlined security fears in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), often rocked by waves of violence between the pro-peace pact Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity and its rival United People's Democratic Front in the wake of the 1997 agreement that ended two decades of bushwar.

Joint forces in 11 groups have carried out a series of raids on suspected hideouts since Tuesday morning and scored outlying Bepchhara village, where the 40-year-old was found to be in captivity.

But the security forces could not trace Bablu to the village that saw men fleeing home for fear of arrest, police told The Daily Star.

Guide Tours that established Hillside Resort on five acres of gentle slopes in September 2001 also launched searches with the help of locals but returned empty-handed.

Seventeen foreign tourists left the hotel on Tuesday and seven others left yesterday, but Hasan Mahmud Khokon, another co-owner of the hotel, said: "The tourists checked out on schedule not in fear."

The district administration deployed two police teams to the hotel, as security was tightened in and around the tourist spot.

Army, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police held an impromptu meeting

Bandarban hotelier

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"The gang threatened us not to inform army or police about it," said Bablu's brother Hasan Monsur, also co-owner of the resort hotel, a unit of Guide Tours Limited in Dhaka.

Hotel authorities filed an abduction case with Bandarban Police Station.

Locals believe the group operating from Chittagong close to town has a role in the abduction that came after apparently the same gang's ransom threat to villagers to pay Tk 1 lakh by February 10.

"The operatives prowl the Shangu riverbank in army and BDR uniforms," said a local resident, asking not to be named.

But the Hillside Resort director said the management could not afford a police or ansar team for security, adding: "We will have to spend up to Tk 40,000 a month, if we hire a security team."

Acting Superintendent of Police Mohammed Muslim and senior army officials visited the scene.