

US chopper crash kills 2 in Iraq

AP, Baghdad

Two American soldiers were killed yesterday when their helicopter crashed in a river west of Baghdad, and gunmen assassinated the deputy police chief in the northern city of Mosul.

The cause of the crash of the OH-58 Kiowa helicopter that killed its two-man crew near Haditha, 120 miles from the capital, was not determined, said Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt. A witness, Emad Rasheed, 45, said he saw a missile hit one of two choppers in the area.

With the latest crash, the US military has lost 15 helicopters since the occupation began in May – most to hostile fire. At least 60 Americans have been killed in the crashes.

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Morocco quake toll rises to 560

Grim search on for survivors

AFP, Imzouren

Thousands of shocked and grieving residents spent the night in the open as rescue teams scoured the rubble yesterday for survivors of a powerful earthquake in northeastern Morocco which killed at least 564 and injured 300 more.

Hospitals in the region were struggling to cope with the flood of casualties amid the desperate search through devastated villages for survivors of Tuesday's quake.

As aftershocks rippled across the region, thousands of panicked residents chose to spend the night in the open.

The death toll, released late Tuesday by the Moroccan official MAP news agency, confirmed fears of a high number of casualties from the quake in Al Hoceima province, which includes both Mediterranean ports and remote mountain hamlets.

The quake, which struck at 2:27 am (0227 GMT) Tuesday, was measured at 6.3 on the Richter scale by French seismologists and was felt as far away as southern Spain.

Search and rescue teams continued to discover more victims as they reached many small villages far up in the mountains.

In Imzouren, some 10 kilometres (six miles) south of Al Hoceima port, an official said the quake had "entirely destroyed" 40 houses filled with sleeping residents.

Cries of "Allah Akbar" (God is Greatest) filled the air in this ruined small town with each discovery of a victim buried beneath the debris.

Arguments raged as to whether the lessons of previous quakes in the region had been learned, with some residents blaming poor construction of houses which came crashing down, as happened with the last major temblor 10 years ago.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia replies to questions from lawmakers during prime minister's question time in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Dr Kamal calls for greater unity to bring in rule of law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday called for a greater unity among the people to establish the rule of law in the country.

Speaking as chief guest at a rally at Shaheed Hadis Park yesterday afternoon, Dr Kamal, also the convenor of Oyikko Pracheshita, said there was no alternative to greater unity at this stage when the entire country was in grip of terrorists and corrupt people.

"Time has come to crush this unholy alliance of terrorists and corrupt politicians," he noted.

Observing that the country was

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A man tries to douse a fire at a Mohammadpur slum from the roof of an adjacent building yesterday. The blaze gutted about 100 shanties.

Kitchen market owner killed, 2 traders hurt in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of assailants killed a kitchen market owner at Ahmed Nagar in Mirpur in a hail of bullets and injured two other traders, in an apparent land dispute, police and a victim's family said.

Seven to eight armed men went to Shikder Kitchen Market at about 9:30pm and sprayed Rashid Shikder, 70, who was sitting at a vegetable shop, with bullets.

Rashid suffered fatal injuries to his head and chest and died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The injured, Narayan and Monir Hossain, are undergoing treatment at the DMCH.

"Local criminals, led by Rahmat, Rabi, Jashim and Baten, have killed my father over a market-land dispute," alleged Mujibur Rahman, son of Rashid.

Nobody was arrested till filing of this report.

Hasina alleges graft against PM's family

Threatens to file case with int'l court once in office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged widespread corruption against Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's family and said if her party took office again, it would go to an international court to recover the money 'looted by the family'.

At party rallies in Bhola amid mounting fears of attack by political rivals, she accused a son of the premier of siphoning off Tk 11,000 cores from Bangladesh to Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

The former prime minister addressed a number of largely peaceful, but hampered roadside rallies at the district headquarters, Lalmoohan, Charfession and Borhanuddin in Bhola district on the second day of her southern region visit that also takes her to Barisal.

TENSION RUNS HIGH

In most places, the organisers could not build stages under the threat of violence by the activists of ruling-alliance leader Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Mikes were broken and looted in Charfession and Lalmoohan and AL

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RMG sector reeling from hartal spree

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The readymade garment (RMG) sector that has about 75 percent contribution in export earnings is now reeling from the recent spate of hartals, leaders of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) said yesterday.

They said political activities like hartals have hit them hard, leaving a very negative impact on exports.

"The global market is open for us. But unfortunately, we are held hostage at home," said BGMEA President Quazi Moniruzzaman yesterday at the launching ceremony of the Euro-Bangla Apparels 2005 under the Asia Invest 11

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Prayer Timings		
February 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-00	6-05
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

India keen to 'walk and live together' with Pakistan

PTI, New Delhi

Observing that India wants to live in peace with all its neighbours, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee yesterday said that it was keen to "walk and live together" with Pakistan.

"Our policy is to have peace with all our neighbours and at the same time keep the country's interests in mind. There is no conflict between the two," Vajpayee told a conference of minorities organised by BJP here.

Maintaining that he had only one message of peace when he visited

Pakistan recently, Vajpayee said friends could be changed but not neighbours.

His message to Pakistan was that "let us walk and live together. If we have to fight, we have to fight against poverty and unemployment but not with each other. We have fought wars and seen the results too," the Prime Minister said.

Sporting a green headgear, Vajpayee said while following the government's policy of having peace with neighbours, India's

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Eco-huts to be built in Sundarbans: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the government has undertaken a plan to set up eco-huts at various points of the Sundarbans in a bid to attract tourists.

Replying to a question from M Nurul Islam, the PM said the huts would help both foreign and local tourists witness the beauty of the world's largest mangrove forest.

A bio-diversity protection project was being implemented in the Sundarbans at a cost of about Tk 400 crore to develop tourism, set up eco-huts and save trees, she added.

Khaleda also said there is a plan to spend about Tk 1.3 crore from the

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PM reaffirms strengthening armed forces

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday reaffirmed her commitment to transform the armed forces into, what she said, strong, efficient and modern military with whatever resources available.

"We need to put more emphasis on advanced training to attain our aim," she said while addressing the graduation ceremony of the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) at Mirpur Cantonment in the capital.

The prime minister told the function that Bangladesh believes in peaceful settlement of all bilateral and international disputes.

"Friendship with all, malice to none is the fundamental of our foreign policy," she said, reaffirming Bangladesh's commitment to establishment of international peace and stability.

"Our standpoint against any kind of terrorism is very clear and our armed forces must proceed with this ideology in mind."

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JS body for rise in kerosene price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary standing committee has recommended an increase in kerosene price instead of lowering the price of diesel to balance their prices.

The state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) will earn an additional Tk 266 crore a year if kerosene price is increased by Tk 3 a litre as recommended by the parliamentary standing committee on energy and mineral resources ministry, sources said.

The parliamentary body at a meeting yesterday took this decision to check the unscrupulous traders' tendency of mixing kerosene with diesel because of its (diesel) higher price.

Diesel now sells at Tk 20 a litre and kerosene at Tk 17 a litre.

Sarder Shakhawat Hossain Bakul, a member of the committee, said, "If the prices of diesel and kerosene are the same the tendency of mixing kerosene with diesel will go."

The working paper of the meeting said the government had fixed diesel price at Tk 20 a litre on January 6 last year but the price of kerosene remained unchanged. As a result, the demand for kerosene has increased sharply as dishonest traders mixed kerosene with diesel.

It went on, "On an average, 52,738 tonnes of kerosene were sold a month from 2000 to 2002. But the quantity rose to 62,970 tonnes a month in 2003 because of the increased price of diesel. Even in

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Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists form a human chain on Tophkhana Road yesterday, protesting killing and repression on newsmen.