

18 killed in Iraq

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occasional explosions and gunfire were heard from the center of the city until about midnight. The roads were largely deserted as people stayed indoors.

This week, Marines took over authority in Fallujah and surrounding areas from the Army. The city on the banks of the Euphrates River is in the so-called Sunni Triangle, where support for Saddam was strong and rebel attacks on American forces are frequent.

In recent months, American troops have rarely ventured into downtown Fallujah, one of the most dangerous areas in Iraq for the US military.

Earlier Friday, four members of the US-trained Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, or ICDC, also were killed while raiding a hideout near Saddam's hometown of Tikrit with US soldiers, the American military said. Three suspected rebels also died and 21 were captured in the raid.

In the town of Shwan, near the

BSF kills two Bangladeshis

UNB, Thakurgaon

Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead two youths at bordering Tareya of Panchagarh yesterday morning.

Villagers said Nazimuddin, 30, of Mondalpara stood at the zero point to talk to his Indian national relative Daimul of Bagpur village on the other side of the border at 9:00am.

The BSF of Kamarganj outpost opened fire on them without any provocation and dragged them with them unused.

northern city of Kirkuk, four people en route to a wedding died when the vehicles they were riding in struck an anti-tank mine. The explosion injured 12 other people, police said Friday.

Gunmen shot and killed an Iraqi police officer late Friday while he was walking home in Kirkuk, Fadila Rashid, an official at the city's morgue, said Saturday.

Also Friday, Time magazine said Omar Hashim Kamal, an Iraqi translator who worked in its Baghdad bureau, died of wounds sustained Wednesday. Kamal was shot by unidentified assailants.

BAGHABARI PROJECT

PDB signs deal with Westmont Power today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Power Development Board (PDB) today signs a power purchasing deal with a Malaysian company to install and operate the second unit 130mw barge-mounted power project in Baghabari.

The PDB inks the agreement with Westmont Power at its office in the morning.

In early October, the Cabinet Purchase Committee approved an unsolicited proposal of the Malaysian company to set up the gas-fired power plant in Baghabari.

Westmont claims it can set up the plant within six months and will charge only US 2.79 cents for per unit of power for 20 years.

However, industry insiders say the company is intending to install a decade-old plant, which is lying with them unused.

UP member stabbed to death

UNB, Pabna

Assailants stabbed a Union Parishad (UP) member to death at Kazirhat-Gopalpur village in Atgharia upazila Friday night.

Member of Chatmohar Union Parishad, Hasan Ali, was also an activist of Awami League.

Following a conflict with his rivals at the village, Hasan took refuge in the house of his sister-in-law at Kazirhat-Gopalpur, where an arbitration was arranged on Kazirhat-Gopalpur Primary School premises to resolve the conflict.

The port city is agog with speculation that disagreements with his cabinet colleagues might have led to the resignation.

The ruling BNP lawmaker attended four functions -- at two schools and two mosques -- in the port city Friday before flying back to the capital in the evening.

A large number of BNP partisans and supporters from his Chittagong-8 constituency and other parts of the city thronged at Shah Amanat International Airport to welcome Khoros when he arrived by a GMG Airlines flight in the morning.

From the airport the former minister went direct to Agrabad Jamboree Field area to inaugurate Kalakalok School there.

He then laid the foundation stone of a mosque at nearby Abbaspara, inaugurated a newly constructed mosque at Chhotopur Police Line and said Juma prayers there, before going to his Mehdibagh home for lunch.

In the afternoon, the business magnate-turned-politician went to Katiol in his constituency and attended the annual prize giving ceremony of Daxin Katiol Ahmad Ullah Government Primary School as the chief guest.

AL heading

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also do not believe the party can dislodge the government by April 30. They rather think the party will be ruined if nothing happens," Bhuiyan claimed.

He however said the government has received information the AL might try to create anarchy and go for killing of noted personalities before its deadline in a desperate bid to topple the government even in an unconstitutional way. "We have also information the party may kill its own leaders to put the blame on the BNP," he said and urged all to remain vigilant against such unholy designs.

The government will crush any attempts to create lawlessness with a heavy hand, he warned.

The AL lacks the strength to bring no-confidence motion in parliament and it is also incapable of causing a mass upsurge to remove the government. This is why it is looking for unconstitutional ways for a change of power, Bhuiyan thought.

He announced there will be by-election within 90 days as per constitutional provisions if the AL resigns from parliament and asked the party to refrain from any such move and join parliament sessions for its survival.

Women

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The government earlier allowed three private recruiting agencies -- Royal Associates, Rupsa Overseas and Tribenay Recruiting Agency -- to send women workers to Saudi Arabia for household jobs.

The rally was followed by a procession that paraded different city roads.

Two hundred and sixty women workers have been sent to Saudi Arabia so far.

Dhaka, Delhi agree to map out product standards

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from Delhi

India and Bangladesh have agreed on a time-bound programme to recognise each other's certification of commodities like food products, agro-products, textiles and leather, in a bid to remove a major non-tariff barrier in bilateral trade.

The two countries also agreed to map out the certification of Bangladeshi products by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

The decisions were taken at the second meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Working Group on Trade held here on March 23 and 24.

The issue of BIS approval for Bangladeshi goods came up in the meeting with specific reference to Bangladesh's cement exports and made significant progress, official sources here said yesterday.

The BIS will inspect the Bangladesh cement plant in the middle of April this year when the Indian High Commission in Dhaka would arrange a round-table meeting with potential Bangladeshi applicants of the 109 products listed for mandatory certification earlier notified by BIS to clarify their doubts, they said.

The draft of the revised India-Bangladesh trade, agreed to by both sides at the joint working group meeting after negotiations for nearly a year, will be signed at a high level meeting on a mutually convenient date, according to the sources. The meeting also agreed to press ahead with discussions on the possibility of a bilateral free trade agreement between India and Bangladesh.

Special diet was served at hospital, prisons, orphanages and vagrant homes.

Independence Day

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Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar, former president Abdur Rahman Biswas, freedom fighters, ministers, diplomats, chiefs of the three services and senior civil and military officials were present.

Khaleda Zia along with other party leaders also laid wreaths at the memorial on behalf of the party as chairperson of the ruling BNP.

Leader of the Opposition in parliament and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina laid wreaths at 7:25am. She was accompanied by AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Abdul Samad Azad, Amir Hossain Amu, Suranjit Sengupta, Abdur Razzaq and Sajeda Chowdhury.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Kazi Farooque Ahmed laid wreaths under the banner of Jatiya Oikya Mancha at 9:15am.

Jatiya Party leaders Sheikh Shahidul Islam and Sadek Siddique laid wreaths at 9:00am.

The prime minister also laid wreaths at the mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman. BNPL leaders and workers were present.

A combined parade of Bangladesh Army, Air Force, Navy, Bangladesh Rifles, police, National Cadet Corps and freedom fighters was held at the National Parade Square in the morning. President Iajuddin Ahmed reviewed the parade and took salute at the march past.

Army personnel also presented spectacular rope jumping from helicopters while a number of paratroopers carrying flags landed in the middle of the Parade Square.

The state-owned radio and television put up special programmes and newspapers brought out special supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

Special diet was served at hospital, prisons, orphanages and vagrant homes.

The president, prime minister

Sourav

FROM PAGE 1

India in a Test match, Ganguly also missed the second Test at home against New Zealand in October against a boil-induced surgery.

Left-handed batsman Yuvraj Singh will take Ganguly's slot as the sixth specialist batsman behind Akash Chopra, Virender Sehwag, Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar and Venkatesh Lakman.

Tendulkar, who made his Test debut during the previous series in Pakistan in 1989, is the only player from either side to have experienced an India-Pakistan Test match on Pakistani soil.

India has been bolstered by the return of frontline bowlers, seamer Ajit Agarkar and leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who missed the preceding one-day series due to injuries.

Pakistan, looking to make amends for their 2-3 defeat in the one-dayers, played safe by not making a short-list. They will name their team after another close look at the wicket on Sunday morning.

AYM Moshiuzzaman are independent candidates for the post of secretary.

The other candidates are Md Mainul Islam Chowdhury, Md Sirajul Haque, Md Rashid, Md Shahidul Islam, Syed Mamun Mahbub, Abdul Hai Kabir, Jesmin Sultan Shamshad, Md Harun-ur-Rashid, Md Taifur Kabir, Prabir Ranjan Halder, Shakila Rowshan Khulu and Satyendra Chandra Bhakta.

Dr Mohammad Zakir Hossain and Rafiqul Islam Mehedi are contesting for the posts of president and secretary from Bikalpa Dhara United Panel.

The other candidates are Mohammad Hefzul Bari, Musifuddin Bakhtiar, Mohammad Anwaruzzaman and Mohammad Abul Hossain.

AYM Moshiuzzaman is contesting the polls as an independent candidate for the post of president.

Md Harun-ur-Rashid and Mohammad Shafuddin Bhuyan are independent candidates for the post of secretary.

He claimed it was only his party that could salvage the nation from the suffocating situation, where the whole administration was shattered by the downside of law and order, price hike of essentials and mismanagement.

Ehsad later inaugurated a rally at Muktangon.

The JP chief said the government's oppressive policy and price hike of essentials prompted the people to get united. He called for forging an even greater unity to help install a new government for building a "new Bangladesh."

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