

Clashes erupt in Baghdad, US offers truce in Falluja

2 US troops, civilians missing; 6 foreigners 'seized'

REUTERS, Baghdad

Street fighting erupted in Baghdad yesterday as youths with rifles and grenade launchers battled US troops in a Sunni Muslim area, witnesses said.

Dozens of gunmen, their faces masked with Arab headdresses, shot at US troops from alleyways in the staunchly Sunni district of Adhimiya in northwestern Baghdad.

The Pentagon said two US soldiers and an unknown number of civilian contractors were missing after an attack on a military fuel convoy in Abu Ghraib, just west of Baghdad, on Friday.

A Reuters journalist saw two captive foreigners, one of them wounded, in a mosque in a village in

the Abu Ghraib district. Gunmen holding them said they were Italian.

The official was quoted as saying that it was not immediately known if the missing Americans had been captured and that a search had been launched.

Irqi insurgents meanwhile said they had seized four Italians and two Americans on the western outskirts of Baghdad Friday but Italy said all Italians registered in Iraq were accounted for.

The US military offered a new ceasefire deal in the Sunni town of Falluja, west of Baghdad, after nearly a week of fighting that has killed hundreds of people.

"Coalition forces are prepared to implement a cease-fire with enemy elements in Falluja commencing at

noon today," Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt told a news conference.

"At this point it's an aspiration. We are hoping to use this press conference...to get this message to the enemy," he said.

Witnesses said fresh clashes had erupted in Falluja despite a unilateral ceasefire declared by the Americans on Friday.

In other attacks, Reuters television film showed a blazing truck that witnesses said had been hit by a roadside bomb aimed at a US convoy on the airport road. A Reuters photographer saw a burning tank on a highway leading west from Baghdad.

More than a million Shias were set to mark the holy day of Arba'in

Polis only after govt serves out term, says PM



PHOTO: STAR
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses a rally on the Physical Training College ground in Mohammadpur yesterday.



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday rejected outright main opposition Awami League's (AL's) demand for mid-term polls, saying elections would be held only after the present government served out its term.

"People voted the four-party alliance into office for five years and you (Sheikh Hasina) have to wait until 2007 for fresh polls," Khaleda, also chairperson of ruling coalition leader BNP, said in a speech to a huge public rally at the Physical Training College in Mohammadpur.

She said the opposition were trying to capture power beyond constitutional means, adding people would resist their evil designs.

Without referring to AL's April 30 deadline for unseating her government, the premier asked the opposition to shun what she said was the

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BNP, AL face-off over Hawa Bhaban siege plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ment Sheikh Hasina, if the AL did not withdraw its programme.

The Hawa Bhaban has been at the centre of controversy since the BNP and its allies came to power, with widespread allegations of corruption and abuse of the government power levelled against the office of the BNP chairperson, which has already been dubbed as alternative power centre within the government.

This is for the first time ever that an opposition party has declared to lay siege to another political party's office.

The civil society and media alongside the opposition political parties have long been demanding

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AL parliamentary team alleges Ctg administration's non-cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary delegation of the main opposition Awami League (AL) probing the recent largest ever arms seizure in Chittagong yesterday accused the government of non-cooperation in its investigation.

The deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police of the prime port city avoided the seven-member delegation led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid.

The government does not want to probe the gunrunning as its high-ups are involved in it. It has directed the local administration not to help the opposition parliamentary team," Hamid told The Daily Star by telephone after reaching the city earlier in the day.

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Man pushed out of bus to death

Students burn 3 vehicles, block road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man was pushed out of a running bus to his death on Begum Rokeya Sarani in Dhaka yesterday, prompting students of the nearby Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University to set fire to three buses, damage six and barricade the busy thoroughfare for two hours.

Witnesses said Akram boarded the Mirpur-bound bus from Farm Gate at around 1:30pm on his way

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Listed criminal's arches for PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supporters of listed criminal Pichchi Helal erected two arches in Mohammadpur to welcome Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to yesterday's BNP meeting at Mohammadpur Physical Training College.

Many leaders of local BNP and its front organisations erected over 50 arches and hung hundreds of banners on the stretches of the roads leading to the venue in violation of a prime ministerial prohibition.

But the two arches drew public

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Interns to get higher pay, more instts to come under MPO

Saifur commits at pre-budget meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government, in next year's budget, will insert some popular steps, like enlarging primary school stipend net and amount, increasing interns' salary and introducing second shifts at technical education

centres.

Besides, a number of private schools and colleges will get government support that comes in the form of monthly payment order (MPO).

At the first inter-ministerial

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Dhaka to send troops to Iraq after power transfer: Mahbub

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is likely to send troops to war-torn Iraq after power in Baghdad is handed over to the local leadership, a key official said.

Bangladesh will stick to its earlier stand and may send troops to the war-ravaged country if there is any request from the UN," Prime Minister's Defence Adviser Mahbubur Rahman told the Daily Star yesterday.

Dhaka can send troops to Iraq even without the request of the UN if the occupying forces leave Iraq and hand over power to an Iraqi government and if the new administration

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Student strike tomorrow

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different student organisations are going on strike at all educational institutions tomorrow demanding immediate arrest and punishment of Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee for inciting the February 27 attack on eminent writer Humayun Azad.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the main opposition Awami League's (AL) student wing, along with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri (BCM) called the strike.

Leaders of the striking organisations yesterday urged the student community to make the strike a success.

Biman rejoinder

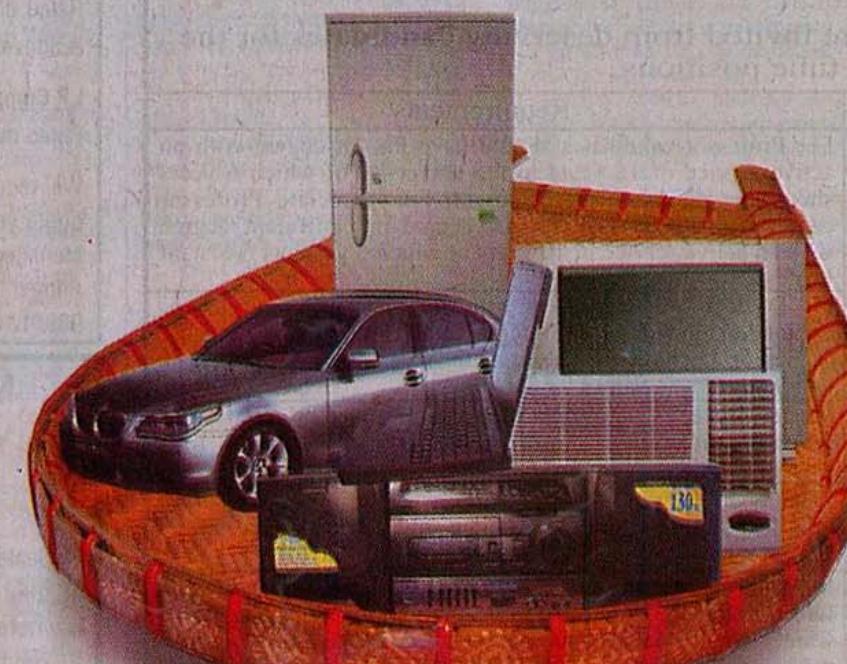
Biman Bangladesh Airlines in a rejoinder on a news item headlined 'Biman to buy backup engine for old F28s' published in The Daily Star on April 8 said the procurement of backup engine has nothing to do with the procurement of two additional F28 aircraft.

It said Biman has only one spare engine for its fleet of three F28s which is not sufficient. "The procurement of engine for F28 was planned in 2002 to meet the shortfall. Due to the shortfall Biman had to hire engines at high cost on several occasions to keep the fleet operational," it said.

About the quoted price of its own F28 in a tender in 2003, Biman said it



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বেশি অর্থ



পারসোনাললোন
কারলোন
জ্যাকেশনলোন
১. প্রসেসিং ফি-এর মামলা নেই
২. ইন্টারেস্ট রেট মাত্র ১৫%
৩. কোন ডাউনপেমেন্ট দিতে হবেনা*
৪. ৫ দিনেই প্রসেস হয়ে যাবে

* প্রথমত পারসোনাল লোন ও জ্যাকেশন লোন এর ক্ষেত্রে অব্যৱহৃত।

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