

26 more Iraqis killed in Falluja, 2 other cities

REUTERS, Falluja

US troops and Iraqi guerrillas fought fierce clashes overnight in the western city of Falluja and 15 Iraqis were killed, witnesses and a medical official said yesterday.

US warplanes attacked targets in the town, and one US armored vehicle was destroyed in the fighting, witnesses said.

"Fifteen Iraqis were killed and 20 were wounded," said Dr Issam Mohammed, a senior medical official.

US Marines launched a crack-down in Falluja on April 5 following the killing and mutilation of four US private security guards in the Sunni Muslim city the previous week. Hundreds of Iraqis have died there in fighting since, hospital officials say.

Last Friday the US military said it had started a suspension of offensive operations in the city, but would fight back if attacked. There have been several rounds of talks on a truce, and fighting has been less intense this week.

AFP from Baghdad adds: Eight

Iraqis were killed and 17 wounded in insurgent mortar attacks in the main northern city of Mosul, the US-led coalition's deputy director of operations, Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, said yesterday.

One attack targeted a police station and the other a coalition base in the city on Thursday evening, Kimmitt told a briefing.

Mosul has seen repeated attacks against coalition troops and their Iraqi allies.

Four Iraqis were killed and six others injured on Wednesday when

a mortar round believed to have been aimed at a police station exploded in a crowded market in the city.

Another report says, three Iraqis were killed and seven others wounded when gunmen clashed with a US army convoy on the main road linking the cities of Kufa and Hilla, hospital sources said.

"Three Iraqis were killed and seven others wounded today (Friday)," said Saifeddin Yusef, a doctor

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Arrest fear haunts Old Dhaka traders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Businesspeople of Old Dhaka are living under the spectre of arrest and police harassment after over 60 traders were arrested in two weeks owing to their links with the protests against murders, crimes and harassment of businesspeople, sources said.

Traders of Lalbagh, Sutrapur and Kotwali thanas said after a series of protests against the murders of fabrics trader Shamsul Haq and his son, Selim Reza and Humayun Kabir of Old Dhaka, police made wholesale arrests of protestors in the old town.

They alleged the recent spate of arrests has prompted around 200 businesspeople from the area to go into hiding abandoning their businesses and the rest are terrified of being arrested.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Lalbagh Police Station Abdul Gaffar however refuted the allegations of wholesale arrests of businesspeople. "The figure that 40 businesspeople have been arrested is incorrect. Some traders have been arrested but on specific cases."

In Lalbagh, traders said a local BNP leader, Aman Ullah, has shut down an enterprise, Erfan Plastic Store, in Nolgola, Lalbagh after its owner refused to comply with Aman's toll demands.

Local traders say around 300 businesses in the area have received similar threats of forced closure if Aman did not get the tolls.

Local traders have also complained that main opposition Awami League adherents are also being targeted by police under the direction of local BNP leaders.

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Top Ctg criminals dodge block raids

Some seen moving with local MP

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Most wanted criminals are dodging block raids police launched on Tuesday amid scenes of law and order downside in the port city of Chittagong.

Police picked up about 400 people in a series of sweeps in four days, and 64 undercover police teams also launched a hunt for the criminals after gunmen shot and killed the accounts officer of a Taiwanese firm, Fu Wang Foods Limited, in Agrabad on April 11.

The same day, assailants shot and injured Managing Director of Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) Golam Rabbani when he and his other colleagues were going

to a project site across the Karnaphuli river by microbus.

Police nabbed some suspects but failed to arrest a former KEPZ managing director and the chief security officer, accused in the first information report.

Joint forces seized a huge cache of smuggled weapons on the Karnaphuli coast on April 2, but the smugglers and others with suspected ties to the racket have yet to be arrested.

Robbers with close links to the Islami Chhatra Shibir looted Tk 56 lakh of a textiles company from a security van in Kalurghat industrial belt on April 1.

The armed gang injured the

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Foul odour in Wasa water 1,50,000 probable leaks in city's supply lines

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Contaminated water supplied by the Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has posed a perennial problem to the residents of Dhaka due to lack of proper planning, supervision and maintenance of the supply network.

Reports of foul odour from Wasa-supplied water were received from a number of areas including greater Shantinagar, Razabazar, Sukrabad, Tallabagh, Badda and Mirpur and various parts of Old Dhaka.

About the causes of contamination, Wasa officials said around 1, 50,000 probable leaks in the supply lines allow sewage and other waste to seep into water. But the Wasa does not have specific information about cracks or holes in the lines, they mentioned.

Seeking anonymity, they said 'illegal water connections' cause faults in Wasa lines and lead to sucking in various pollutants. Road

diggings by various agencies also damage water and sewerage lines resulting in contamination of water.

Quoting a recent survey by Dhaka City Corporation, Wasa sources said there are 3, 60, 000 holdings in the capital but Wasa water is subscribed by 2,08,000 holdings.

Since the Wasa is the lone authority to supply water, the figures suggest over 1, 50, 000 holdings have illegal water connections, they pointed out.

According to a primary estimate, the number of illegal water users is even higher, since a lot of legal subscribers illegally connect an extra line to meet increased demand, one official said.

" We are getting stinking water for the past one week. I complained to the landlord to check the water reservoir but no problem with it was found. Now we are sure Wasa water is contaminated," said a resident of Indira Road.

Neighbours also made similar allegations and said sometimes they get blackish water.

These are nothing new as they face similar problems every year, particularly during summer when water supply falls but demand rises, residents said. They sought a solution to these problems.

Talking to The Daily Star, Wasa Managing Director A N H Akhtar Hossein admitted there are complaints of foul odour in Wasa water.

"This problem is not faced all over Dhaka. These are local problems. We will solve the local problems upon receipt of complaints," he said.

Sources said although there is no problem with the water generation lines, the supply lines are in a dismal state. Most of the supply lines are 30-year, 40-year or even 80-year old, requiring immediate repair or replacement.

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Road accidents in Sirajganj, Tangail kill 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six people were killed and 41 injured in separate road accidents in Sirajganj and Tangail yesterday.

Four were killed in Sirajganj while the rest in Tangail.

In Sirajganj, a road mishap on the Sirajganj-Kazipur Highway at Ghorachara left four people killed and 25 injured, according to the BSS.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place when the driver

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Prayer Timings		
April 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-24	6-28
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

THE STRENGTH WITHIN

In pursuit of happiness

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

"Just questions and questions: Can you overcome the sky-kissing hate on the doorstep of your hardened soul or cross the mountain of selfishness?" Julia recites a poem, sitting next to her bed in a rehabilitation centre for the disabled.

She recites loud, stuttering yet strong. Words find it hard to flow from her mouth, yet a resolute spirit carries through and Julia illustrates her view of the world.

At 15, Julia believes she is on her way to earn a master's degree for which she has all the basics -- she can read, write and use computer. According to her "Didi" Angela Gomez, her intelligence can be termed in no other word than brilliant.

Julia has started to dream of a better future after years in a hostile environment. When she was young, her ears were itchy and her

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Disabled girls at the Banchte Shekha rehabilitation centre in Jessore learn stitching in their struggle to break out of poverty and social stigma that smother their life.

PHOTO: STAR