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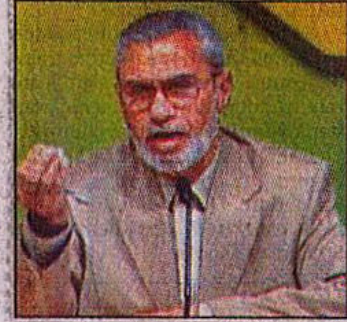
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Iraq governing council head killed in car bomb

14 guerillas killed in clashes; Italian soldier dies of injury



Abdul Zahra Othman Mohammad

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Asuicide car bomb killed the head of Iraq's Governing Council and eight others yesterday, dealing a major blow to the US coalition battling a Shia insurgency and a growing prisoner abuse scandal.

Abdul Zahra Othman Mohammad, a Shia Muslim also known as Izzedin Salim, was in the last car of a Governing Council convoy waiting at a checkpoint to enter the "Green Zone" coalition

headquarters in central Baghdad when the car bomb exploded.

The attack underlined the vulnerability of the Baghdad administration just six weeks before the US-led occupiers are set to hand over sovereignty to Iraqis, though officials insisted violence would not derail the political process.

The blast tore through the crush of cars and pedestrians waiting to get into the heavily guarded compound of Saddam Hussein's former palaces, blowing bodies apart and

melting the asphalt.

"The other members escaped unharmed. They managed to get through the checkpoint before the explosion. Salim was still waiting to enter," Deputy Foreign Minister Hamed al-Bayati said.

He told Reuters it was too soon to say if the attack was aimed specifically at the councilors, gathering for a meeting of the 25-member body which is headquartered in the Green Zone.

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A bout of rain yesterday morning brought a brief respite to city-dwellers from an unrelenting heat wave for the last few weeks. The photo was taken in front of the National Press Club.

Rocca arrives today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina B Rocca today arrives in Dhaka on a three-day official visit as part of her South Asian tour.

Rocca will hold official talks with Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury in the afternoon on bilateral, regional and international issues.

However, sources said the issues of human rights and religious

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Apology

The Daily Star in its report on May 14 headlined "JS probe accuses 24 firms of gas theft" mentioned Savar Textiles as an accused in gas pilferage. But on rechecking relevant

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PM asks AL to give up conspiracy, return to JS

'Press was failing to play a responsible role'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday used the parliament floor to ask the main opposition Awami League (AL) to return to the House giving up the 'course of conspiracy and anarchy' to unseat her government.

"You have made attempts to dislodge the government from office with conspiracy and criminal activities in an undemocratic and unconstitutional way, but you will never be, as people have rejected you.

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Hasina threatens to shut down mills

Thousands shed tears to mourn Ahsanullah Master

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday threatened to shut down mills and factories and put barricades on roads and highways across the country if the accused in the Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder case were not arrested in a week.

Ahsanullah's assassins have taken shelter at the houses and offices of top BNP leaders and lawmakers, Hasina told a big rally at Tongi, organised by local Awami League unit to mourn the frontline

opposition lawmaker's assassination.

A group of about 15 assailants gunned down Ahsanullah and wounded five others in a burst of gunfire at a ward-level conference of AL's volunteers' wing Shechchihasebak League on May 7.

As Jabid Ahsan Sohel, the youngest son of the slain lawmaker, started addressing the rally, thousands broke down in tears with some beating their chests in an unprecedented display of emotion for their beloved leader.

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Stock crashes as Sonia invited to new govt talks

Leftists refuse to join her govt; BJP to boycott oath-taking ceremony

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian President Abdul Kalam invited Congress party leader Sonia Gandhi to hold talks either late yesterday or today on forming a new government.

Kalam's spokesman SM Khan told AFP that the meeting would likely be held today, as Gandhi had not requested a time yesterday.

At the meeting, Gandhi would

show the ceremonial head of state she has enough support to form a government.

"The president, having noted that Sonia Gandhi having been elected leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party sent a letter at 5:00 pm (1130 GMT) Monday requesting her to meet him today or tomorrow morning for discussions at her convenience," a statement said.

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Batting blues again

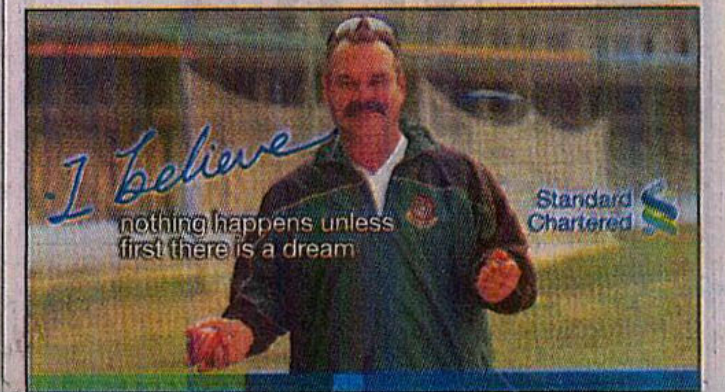
RABEED IMAM, from St Vincent

In the end it became a case of what might have been as Bangladesh went down by 23 runs chasing 125 in a rain-reduced second one-day international at the Arnos Vale ground Sunday.

The victory gave the West Indies an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

After a very disciplined bowling effort by the tourists that had kept the West Indies under wraps in their allotted 25 overs, Bangladesh's top

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