

Suicide bomb brings carnage to Iraq street

5 contractors among 21 dead

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraqis were opening their shops, walking to their offices and queuing up to try to find casual work in a Baghdad street yesterday when a suicide car bomber blew an ordinary morning apart, killing at least 13 people.

It was the second such bombing in the Iraqi capital in 24 hours and coincided with a wave of assassinations aimed at the new interim government appointed to take over

from the US-British occupation authorities on June 30.

The morning rush-hour attack devastated a busy street near Tahrir Square and ripped the front off one building. Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi said the blast had killed five foreign contractors in a passing convoy.

"I walked past the convoy on my way to work. Then this blast hit behind me, throwing me to the ground," said Abdel Zahra Rahim Lutfi, lying injured at Al-Kindi

Hospital.

"That area is so busy in the morning. Lots of people were hurt."

Hospitals said eight other people, including two African workers, were also killed. About 60 were wounded. Many had limbs torn off by the blast.

The impact of the blast shattered windows down filthy side alleys, lined with workshops and

Proshika chief shown arrested in 2 more cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proshika President Qazi Faruque Ahmed could not walk out from jail yesterday as he was shown arrested in two graft cases filed by Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac).

Metropolitan Magistrate Shamim Ara Khatun issued the

BSP concerned over Vat, newsprint duty hike

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Sangbadpatra Parishad (BSP) has expressed concern over rise in duty on import of newsprint and value added tax (Vat).

In a statement yesterday, BSP

Unocal plans pipeline thru' pristine forest

Magurchhara blow-out claims remain unmet seven years after

SHARIER KHAN and REJAU KARIM

US company Unocal is preparing for construction of a three-kilometre pipeline through the small but environmentally sensitive Lowachhara forest in Moulavibazar while the nation is yet to be compensated for the enormous losses the Magurchhara gas field blowout caused seven years ago.

Although Unocal's American predecessor Occidental was found fully responsible for the blowout that damaged a gas structure worth \$600 million, the gas field's owner Petrobranga is not pursuing compensation issue.

Meanwhile, Unocal claims it has already compensated for the gas damage.

The environment ministry had initially assessed an environmental damage of Tk 609 crore.

As Unocal rejects this assessment, the environment ministry has formed a three-member committee headed by Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud to re-assess the environmental damage. The committee will file a report within three months, sources said.

Although Bangladesh did not get any compensation, Occidental had bagged insurance claims against the blowout and left the country by selling its stakes -- assets and liabilities -- to Unocal.

Amid resistance from some quarters within the government, Petrobranga back in 2002 formally sent to Unocal its compensation claim for damage of 240 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas worth 600 million dollars. But this was never followed up although the state minister for energy told the press Bangladesh would go to the international court.

Occidental had begun drilling on the spot on June 2, 1997. That was its first drilling since it signed a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) on January 11, 1995. This PSC was naturally terminated on January 11, 1998 for failing to fulfil the

see page 11 col 6



TV artiste Tarana Halim hurt in attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted TV artiste Tarana Halim suffered cuts as masked criminals attacked her with knives in her parents' house in Dhamondi in the early hours of yesterday.

Three men wearing black masks -- two of them in lungi and another

Prized al-Qaeda man nabbed

Pakistan winds up 5-day hunt; 72 killed, 10 militant detained

AGENCIES, Islamabad

Three Pakistani soldiers were killed in a bomb blast in the region of North Waziristan, near the Afghan border.

Local officials say that they suspect that the attackers, believed to al-Qaeda militants, used a remote control device to blow up the paramilitary vehicle near Miranshah, the main town in North Waziristan.

Police have arrested three suspects, although their identities have not yet been revealed by police.

Pakistani troops meanwhile yesterday ended a major operation to flush out al-Qaeda suspects and their local supporters from hide-outs in the remote region near Afghanistan that saw 72 people

killed, including 17 security personnel.

The operation was launched after foreign militants killed 15 security personnel near the town of Shakai, 210 miles west of the capital, Islamabad, last Wednesday, Maj. Gen. Shaikat Sultan said.

Pakistan expects more arrests to follow its capture of a nephew of the alleged mastermind of the September 11 attacks and of another high profile foreign national, Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat says.

The government announced late on Sunday the capture of an important al-Qaeda member with a \$1 million (550,000 pounds) bounty on his head and the arrest of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Zidane grateful to Barthez



AFP, Lisbon

Real Madrid supporters might have had divided loyalties as perennial title hopefuls England met the real deal in holders France in their European Championship Group B opener -- but in the event it was their French superstar who outshone his English pretender.

Zinedine Zidane and David Beckham led out their respective nations at Lisbon's Stadium of Light and after the English skipper's

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

TODAY'S MATCHES

CZECH REPUBLIC vs LATVIA
Live at 9:55 pm
GERMANY vs NETHERLANDS
Live at 12:40 am (Wednesday)



PHOTO: AFP

STOP THAT! Talismanic French captain Zinedine Zidane, left, scores France's equaliser against England during the Euro 2004 encounter at the Estadio da Luz in Lisbon early yesterday.

CELLPHONE PROJECT

BTTB seals \$76m deal with Huawei, Siemens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State-owned telecoms monopoly Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) yesterday sealed a \$76 million contract with China's Huawei Technologies and Germany's Siemens to launch its controversial mobile phone service.

The companies would jointly put together a network of 250,000 cellular phones by the end of the year using GSM (global system for mobile communications) standard telephone all over the country, BTTB officials said.

Officials at the BTTB said

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Per capita income now \$444

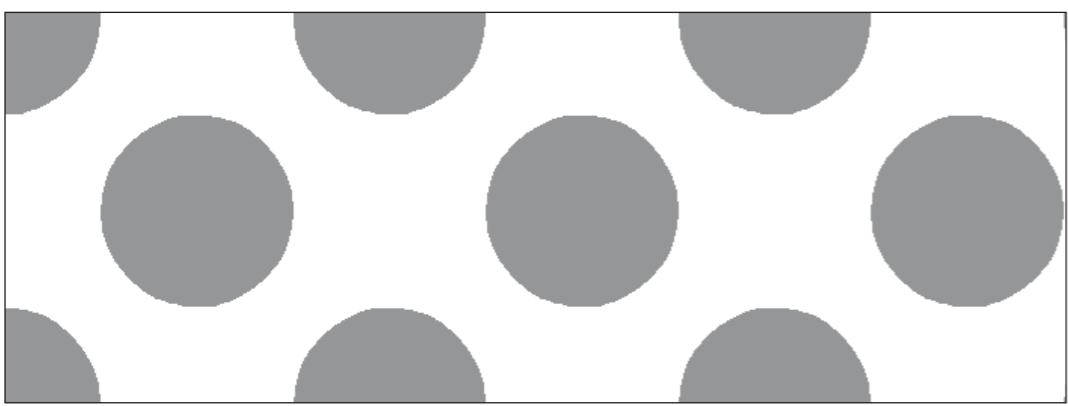
BSS, Dhaka

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday informed the House that the per capita income rose to Tk 25,944 in 2003-04 fiscal year which was 19.52 percent more than the income in 2001-02.

Replying to a question from

Jamaat member Miah Golam Parwar, the finance minister said in dollar terms, the per capita income was \$444 in 2001-2002.

To another question from Jamaat member Riasat Ali Biswas, he said 32 applications for opening branches of private banks are awaiting approval of the Bangladesh Bank.



Storm toll reaches 13

AP, Cox's Bazar

Seven more bodies washed up the Bangladesh coastline, raising the death toll from a powerful weekend storm to at least 13, police said yesterday. About 140 fishermen were still missing.

The storm hit Saturday, with waves reaching 40 feet and wind

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Leave vehicles of Japan cos alone

Envoy asks DMP on police requisition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh has asked the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner to exempt the vehicles owned by the Japanese companies from police requisition.

The June 6 letter of the Japanese envoy also expressed concern over the random police requisition of the vehicles under the Requisition Act.

"...It hampers not only daily business activities of the Japanese companies which have only lim-

ited number of vehicles, but also the direct foreign investment including from Japan, widely encouraged by the Bangladesh government," Ambassador Matsuhiro Horiguchi wrote to the police commissioner Ashraf Huda.

The ambassador referred to his May 12 meeting with the inspector general of police on the matter in his request to the DMP commissioner.

Masud Karim, personnel manager of Japanese company YKK Bangladesh Ltd. based in Dhaka

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Housing prices to shoot on new tax measures

Registration tax doubled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposed tax rise and Vat measure for real estate businesses are feared to deal a bad blow to the sector hit hard already by unusual price spiral of construction materials.

"Prices of construction materials shot up between 40-100 percent in recent months. Many real estate companies were forced to suspend their works, apprehending that the construction costs of per square foot will go up by Tk 200," said Mahmudul Hassan, general secretary of Real Estate & Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab), at a press briefing at the National Press Club yesterday.

Finance Minister M Saifur

Rahman has proposed to double the 5 percent tax rate at source for registration and transfer of immovable assets, and to bring real estate companies under the Vat net in the fiscal year 2004-05.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
June 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation