

UK terror detainee targeted Heathrow

Claims news report

REUTERS, London

A senior al-Qaeda figure planning to attack London's Heathrow airport was among 12 terrorism suspects arrested in Britain two days ago, newspapers reported yesterday.

None of the reports quoted a named source and all differed in details, but most linked the arrests with recent swoops in Pakistan and this week's alert in New York and Washington.

If true, that could help persuade skeptics in the United States who have questioned the justification for their alert, which led to some of the most disruptive security measures since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

British police sources could not confirm Thursday's reports but said they appeared to be based on information discovered on computer equipment seized in Pakistan.

Police say the new British arrests were the result of a long-planned, intelligence-led operation that began before recent roundups in Pakistan.

The British government played down reports that Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports, was an imminent target.

"We've always adopted the policy... that if there was a specific threat, a specific target, then we would tell people, as was the case over British Airways flights to America some months ago," cabinet minister Peter Hain told BBC radio.

The Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Mail and the Sun each ran versions of the story, citing unnamed Pakistani officials saying plans to attack Heathrow were found on the computer of Mohammad Naeem Noor Khan, held last month in Lahore.

The reports also mentioned a suspected senior al-Qaeda operative in Britain named Abu Musa al-Hindi or Abu Eisa al-Hindi. Three papers said

Hindi was tasked with attacking Heathrow. Three said he was among the 12 arrested.

CNN reported on Thursday that Hindi had been in contact with Khan.

In February last year Britain deployed tanks and troops at Heathrow after reports al-Qaeda was planning a rocket attack on a plane, and earlier this year British Airways canceled flights to Washington and Saudi Arabia following security scares.

Security at the airport has been on its second-highest level since November but was not stepped up after Tuesday's arrests.

US officials have said Khan's computers included scouting reports about financial buildings in the United States that might have been targets, prompting the tough security measures in New York and Washington this week.

US officials have since acknowledged that most of the information on the seized computers was several years old.

The 12 British suspects were being held at a high-security London police station after being arrested on Tuesday, mostly in daylight raids, including one high-speed car chase.

The Times said this was an indication the raids were carried out more urgently than similar sweeps in the past, which are traditionally carried out before dawn when suspects are likely to be home. It said the urgency was brought on by the US clampdown, which British police were not expecting.

Britain has arrested more than 600 people under terrorism laws since Sept. 11, 2001. But fewer than 100 have been charged with any crime and only 15 have been convicted.

Muslim groups have complained that British police have been overly zealous in anti-terrorism sweeps in the past, often with little evidence that can stand up in court.

Anguri's husband Mohammad Hossain Ali trafficked his sister and nephew out of the country in July 1997.

The investigation officer pressed charges against the three on November 25, 2002.

Special Public Prosecutor Akhteruzzaman was the counsel for the prosecution while Mohammad Shahjahan Biswas was for the defence.

Bombay Sweets' Tk 12 lakh mugged

UNB, Narayanganj

Armed muggers snatched away Tk 12 lakh of the Bombay Sweets Company from a van coming to Dhaka from Chittagong yesterday.

Officials of the company carrying the money in the van were blocked on the highway near Cute Palli at Sonargaon at about noon.

Police said the muggers coming in a private car (No. Dhaka Metro Ja-12-9355) blocked the passage of the van.

Quick they jumped upon the van and at gunpoint snatched away the bag full of money.

BDR, BSF

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Setting up of various establishments including houses, roads, bridges and erection of barbed wire fences within 150 yards of the border and obstruction by BSF in transportation of bamboo and other forest resources on common river routes were also discussed at the conference.

Deputy Director General of BDR Brigadier General Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil led Bangladesh side, while Inspector General of BSF Alexander Daniel led the 12-member BSF delegation, according to a BDR press release.

The next border meet between the two sides is likely to be held in India after three months, meeting sources said.

Only 6 of 33

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specific charge was found against them.

Amal Krishna Mandal, first class magistrate of Barguna Sadar upazila court accepted the charge sheet against the six and acquitted all others.

Waliul Islam, imam of Police Line Mosque and alleged coordinator of the Islamic extremists group, was among the acquitted.

Court sources said during the hearing, the court inspector did not oppose the charge sheet that dropped charges against 27 of the 33 Islamic militants including all the major accused. Political pressure and interference appeared to have influenced the investigation, the sources added.

TIN FOR INT'L CONNECTION

Women phone operators to feel the pinch

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The regulatory order that has made submission of tax identification number (TIN) mandatory to subscribe international telephone connection will badly hurt the business of women telephone operators under Village Phone (VP) programme, industry sources speculate.

The statutory regulatory order (SRO) issued recently by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is applicable to both mobile and fixed-line international telephone connections.

"The new SRO was aimed at boosting the government's revenue by widening the VAT (Value-added Tax) net," an NBR official said.

But, "by no means, those poor ladies [women VP operators] can afford to have TINs," said a telecom industry source.

Under the VP programme, Grameen Bank distributes loans to rural poor women to buy cellphone sets and subscribe GrameenPhone services. According to a study, the programme "yields significant positive social and economic impacts, including relatively large consumer surplus and immeasurable quality of life benefits."

Mild tremor jolts Rangpur region

BSS, Rangpur

A mild earthquake jolted different areas in the Rangpur region on Wednesday morning, official sources said.

The mild tremor hit Rangpur town for three seconds at 8:15am. But the origin or the strength of the quake could not be identified or measured for lack of necessary equipment, local meteorological office sources said.

The Chittagong seismological office also could not locate or measure the magnitude of the tremor as one of the three components of seismological instruments was not working.

"We can't officially confirm the quake that possibly hit Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and other areas simultaneously as there is no meteorological office in those areas," the sources said.

However, officials and locals of Kurigram and some parts of Lalmonirhat told BSS that they also experienced a jolt for about four to five seconds at 8:15am the same day.

Brother, sister electrocuted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A brother and a sister were electrocuted in Kanchpura in Dakkhinkhan, Uttara yesterday.

Abdul Aziz, 23, and his sister Poppy, 10, went to collect some water hyacinths for their cattle when the latter slipped into an underwater ditch.

Aziz rushed to save her fearing she might drown, but both were electrocuted as a cable from an adjacent electric pole fell out in the water.

Locals recovered the bodies and police sent those to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Verdict

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Special Public Prosecutor Fazlur Rahman Khan opposed the prayer and prayed for pronouncing the verdict.

On hearing both the sides, the judge granted the adjournment and fixed September 8 for delivery of the judgment.

Ershad's counsellors had also filed a criminal appeal with the High Court for transferring the case to some other court. In the petition they stated that their client would not get justice from the court. The High Court, however, had directed the divisional court to dispose of the case.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption filed the corruption case accusing Ershad and three tax officials on July 27, 1992.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) gave the BAC nod to file the case against Ershad and three tax officials on November 30, 1992. But the same day it decided to exempt the three tax officials from the case.

In the case filed with Ramna Police Station, it was alleged that Ershad, while in power, paid Tk 7,43,416 as income tax for six years (1983-1989). Later, he withdrew Tk 2,76,324 from the income tax money without submitting any documents in favour of his action.

The investigation officer of the case submitted the charge sheet naming Ershad as the lone accused on December 19 the same year. The names of three others were dropped from the charge sheet and they were shown as prosecution witnesses.

The court framed charges against Ershad on June 17, 1993 and recorded statements of three prosecution witnesses during the trial.

A large number of leaders and activists of Jatiya Party (Ershad) yesterday gathered on the court premises. Additional police forces were deployed to avoid any untoward incident.

India, Pakistan

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meeting on Wednesday to firm up New Delhi's response to Pakistan's fresh proposals on de-escalation of military presence on the Siachen Glacier.

Pakistan favours mutual withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani troops in the Glacier to the 1971 proposition but India wants a freeze on the current position held by the forces of the two sides on the glacial heights and that the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) first demarcated.

Indian soldiers hold all vantage strategic points along the heights in Siachen and control key mountain passes along the Saltoro range since 1984. The two countries' claims to the Glacier are based on hugely differing interpretations of where the AGPL lies.

As part of the ceasefire along the Line of Control dividing India and Pakistan, the two sides currently hold fire all along the 72-kilometre Siachen Glacier.

The two countries had in the past discussed the Siachen Glacier conflict a number of times and came close to an agreement on de-escalation in Siachen Glacier in 1989. The last round of defence secretary-level talks were held in 1998.

The meeting between the defence secretaries came a day after the two countries wrapped up two days of talks on strengthening people-to-people and cultural contacts. They agreed to work out a mechanism to address issues relating to release of civilian prisoners and fishermen in each other's custody and exchange views on liberalising visa regime to promote travel of more pilgrims to shrines on both sides.

AFP adds from New Delhi: "We have a positive and an open mind on this issue," Pakistani Defence Secretary Hamid Nawaz Khan said, referring to a 1990 proposal to demilitarise the 72-kilometre (45-mile) long Siachen glacier which straddles Himalayan Kashmir and overlooks China.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, meanwhile, summoned key cabinet colleagues to the defence ministry for a briefing on New Delhi's stand on the rugged

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

AL stages hunger strike for judgement

UNB, Dhaka

Senior Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday observed a token hunger strike at Central Shaheed Minar demanding immediate implementation of the judgment in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman murder case.

A special court in 1998 condemned to death 12 former army officers for killing Bangabandhu along with his family members on August 15, 1975. The verdict awaits confirmation by the Supreme Court.

Awami Shechhyasevak League organised the token hunger strike. Abdus Samad Azad MP, Zillur Rahman MP, Abdul Jalil MP, Abdur Razzaq MP, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury and Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, among others, took part in the programme.

Samad alleged that the BNP-Jammata alliance government out of an ill motive is dilly-dallying the execution of the verdict.

Woman commits

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of two domestic helps at the house, as saying yesterday.

"He (Jitu) woke us up from sleep in the early hours today (Thursday) to tell Mitu has committed suicide by hanging herself with a scarf from the ceiling fan," Rasheda said, adding that they found the body lying on the floor with a scarf tied around her neck.

The husband took the body to the National Heart Institute where doctors declared her dead. Police then took Mitu's body to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Morgue sources said old and fresh injury marks were seen on Mitu's head and face, adding that she died of suffocation.

The domestic helps told the police the couple used to quarrel almost every day and the husband, who returned home from abroad recently, beat her up often. Ramna police arrested the husband and picked up the two maids for interrogation.

At Nakhlapara, four youths pulled down Harun Molla, 21, from his rickshaw in front of Chhpara Mosque at 1:00pm. One of them, stabbed Harun, an employee of the Super Cable Network at Green Market in Farmgate, in the head and abdomen before fleeing the scene.

His friend Sujan, who was accompanying Harun, rushed him to DMCH where doctors pronounced him dead.

Sujan said they were going to meet a magician at Nakhlapara in the hope to know who stole prepaid phone cards worth about Tk 40,000 from his shop at East Rajabazar on July 31.

"The attackers might be involved with theft at my shop," he said.

glacier, officials said.

Earlier Wednesday, India and Pakistan in a joint statement said they had discussed wide-ranging proposals to "promote friendly exchanges and cooperation in the fields of art, archaeology, culture, education, science and technology, tourism and youth affairs.

"The implementation of the programmes would be undertaken through mutual coordination," it said as the talks ended in New Delhi.

"Views were also exchanged on liberalizing the visa regime," it said, adding the two sides had also discussed ways to boost religious tourism.

"Both sides (also) agreed to address the humanitarian issues concerning civilian prisoners in each other's custody," the statement said, but it was not immediately known whether India sought the release of 54 of its soldiers held in Pakistani jails.

The talks are part of discussions known as the Composite Dialogue Process revived in January as part of a step-by-step approach to bury decades of hostilities.

The statement was silent on an end to a ban on Indian TV broadcasts in Pakistan. The restriction was imposed by Islamabad in 2002 after the two countries came close to war.

Indian government sources said the issue was broached in talks between Pakistani Tourism Secretary Jalil Abbas and his Indian counterpart Neena Ranjan.

"The implementation (of the ban's end) was not finalised," a senior government source said.

India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since 1947, sent almost one million troops to their borders after the Indian parliament was attacked in December 2001 by Islamic rebels. New Delhi said were sponsored by Islamabad. Pakistan denies the charge.

The ban on Indian television broadcasts across Pakistan came during the 10-month tense military standoff.

Tagore

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towering literary life spanning over 60 years.

Rabindranath dominates the Bangla literary scene with copiousness of works. He was not only an immensely versatile poet; he was also a great short story writer, novelist, playwright, essayist, and composer of songs, as well as a talented painter.

His essays ranged over literature, politics, culture, social change, religious beliefs, philosophical analysis, international relations, and much else.

Different government and non-governmental cultural organisations have laid out special programmes on the occasion.

After having won world-fame with the mystical-devotional poetry of the English Gitanjali, he dug over much along that particular seam -- a one-sided impression of his work. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913.

Born to a wealthy land-owning family of Bengal, Rabindranath was initiated into art fairly late in his life and painted close to 2,500 paintings.

In 1930, through a series of exhibitions in Paris, London, Berlin, Moscow and New York, the world discovered the poet Rabindranath as an important modern painter.

Politically active in India, Rabindranath was a supporter of Gandhi, but warned of the dangers of nationalistic thought. Unable to gain ideological support to his views, he retired into relative solitude. Between 1916 and 1934, he travelled widely, attempting to spread the ideal of uniting the East and the West.

Only hours before he died on this day in 1941 (Sraban 22 in Bangla calendar), he dictated his last poem.

Affected farmers

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state minister told reporters that the aid will reach the flood-hit farmers within seven days.

"Funds have been sent to the deputy commissioners of the flood-hit districts," he said, adding, "The DC is the convenor of district Agriculture Rehabilitation Committee and the deputy director of agriculture will work as member secretary." The committees have started procuring seed and fertiliser, he added.

The government has allocated around Tk 49 crore for implementation of the first phase, which is aimed to aid 19 lakh flood-stricken farmer families in 38 districts.

This is the first time that 100 percent of the flood-hit farmers have been brought under the rehabilitation scheme, an official said.

The state minister said this is also for the first time that affected farmers are receiving support of agri-inputs from the government to grow current season's crops.

Under the programme, buffer stocks of seed and seedlings are being made for future, he said.

As per the assessments made until July 25, the agriculture rehabilitation programme will require about Tk 124 crore, he added.

9 cops die

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"We had exhausted our ammunition. Had he succeeded in opening the door he would have killed us," Nayak said.

He said he believed there were two attackers but that one of them managed to escape around midnight.

Two lesser-known rebel groups al-Mansoorain and the al-Madina regiment claimed responsibility for the attack in telephone calls to local media.

Al-Mansoorain claimed responsibility for a similar attack last month that killed five policemen and two rebels.

Sharma said militants usually increase violence ahead of India's independence day, celebrated every year on August 15. Militants and separatist politicians observe the event as a "black day".

"They (rebels) always increase violence around republic and independence days," said Sharma.

He said rebels were diverting their resources to Srinagar, which houses the offices and residences of all the top officials and politicians, including Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed.

Indian Kashmir is in the grip of an Islamic insurgency that has claimed tens of thousands of lives since 1989.

40pc Bangladeshis

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workers," she said.

"The number of low-skilled workers allowed into the UK from outside the European Union remains small compared with other countries and is controlled by strict quotas which have been further reduced" since EU enlargement on May 1.

Primary education

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to resume classes once the flood runs its course as it has severely damaged the infrastructure. The MPME is looking for alternatives to cope with the situation.

"We have asked authorities to take necessary steps to provide education to students of severely damaged schools at their neighbouring institutions," said an official of the MPME. Classes would be taken in additional shifts to accommodate more students, the official, who asked not to be named, added.

The raging floods prompted closure of more than one-fourth of the country's 97,325 education institutions in 42 districts including the capital Dhaka.

Classes and examinations in many educational institutions have been suspended for indefinite period while many others are contemplating following suit. Some 1,203 primary schools have been converted into temporary shelter centres.

The education ministry earlier asked the heads of the public and private educational institutions in the flood-affected areas to turn their establishments into flood shelter centres.

The flooding is also expected to severely affect the academic calendar, as no one knows how long it would last.

Education ministry officials, however, said classes would be held during the month of Ramadan to make up for the lost time.

Tk 1,500cr

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Public Works Department, Tk 110 crore to health ministry, Tk 100 crore to disaster management and relief ministry and Tk 70 crore to the education ministry.

Saifur directed the finance division to immediately release the repair funds according to the needs highlighted by the ministries.

Marooned

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Barua said similar food assistance was going on in all flood affected areas. The bank was distributing food assistance to its flood affected members while the medical team was giving health assistance to all the flood affected people.

Grameen Bank Area Commander Horihor Chandra said the food assistance programme of the bank during the flood was very successful as 99 percent of the money spent during 1998 flood was paid back after the flood.

A large number of women and children also gathered at a nearby mobile health camp set up by Grameen Kallayan. Most of women and children are suffering from skin diseases, dysentery, diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases, said the medical officer of the health camp.

Over 200 people visit the camp every day for medical advice, they said. "Around 30 percent of the patients are suffering from dysentery, or diarrhoea," said Dr Mian Mohammad Nurul Monir of the camp. He feared a diarrhoea epidemic in the wake of the recession of floodwaters until the government took adequate measures.

The Grammen Kallayan arranged five mobile teams bringing together government and private doctors on emergency basis. They also provide medicine to the worst victims and the members of the Grameen bank.

The bank distributed over 2.14 lakh in oral saline among the flood victims.

US helicopter

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Najaf's general hospital, near the scene of the fighting in 1920 Revolution Square, came under rocket attack, killing a doctor and seriously wounding four other staff members, said a health ministry official.

In all, medics said four people were killed and 19 wounded in the clashes, which erupted overnight when Shia radical leader Moqtada Sadr's Mehdi Army militia attacked Iraqi police.

And in what could be a sign of a fresh coordinated onslaught against foreign troops, Sadr's representative in Iraq's second city of Basra declared holy war against British forces after four of their comrades were arrested.

Three militiamen were killed and another three wounded in a brief skirmish with British troops in northern Basra, Sheikh Saad al-Basri said.

"We will wage jihad (holy war) and war against the foreign troops, not against police and Iraqi forces," he vowed earlier.

"However, if they (the Iraqi personnel) fight on the side of the occupiers, we will strike them harshly."

A military spokesman said British troops came under three small arms fire attacks that caused no multinational casualties or damage to equipment.

Two projectiles were fired at a multinational base camp in Sibah, south of Basra on the Kuwaiti border, causing no harm, the military said.

In Sadr's Baghdad slum stronghold of Sadr City, another person was killed and two others wounded in fighting between US forces and the Mehdi Army, said officials at Al-Shuader hospital.

Back in Najaf, Sadr aides accused US troops of damaging a minaret of the city's holiest shrine, the mausoleum of Imam Ali, which has remained a Sadr stronghold since his militia waged an uprising against US forces in the spring.

"The occupation forces and those collaborating with them attacked the Imam Ali mausoleum and we call on Muslims to help defend this holy place," his fighters shouted over loudspeakers.

The US military branded the overnight clashes an "overt violation" of a June truce which had quelled Sadr's uprising.

Interior Minister Falah al-Naqib told a Baghdad news conference that the government would not negotiate with the militias.

"We are not going to go into any negotiations. We are going to fight these

WFP may call

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local doctor. The poor people are reeling from the immense crisis of drinking water and drugs.

The high number of people sick with diarrhoea and other diseases overstretched the services of most hospitals and upazila health complexes, our correspondents from Sylhet, Gaibandha and Rajshahi said.

According to the health directorate monitoring cell, 9,617 people were taken ill with diarrhoea in the last 24 hours and three children died from the waterborne disease.

As many as 696 people have fallen sick with pneumonia, 215 people with skin diseases and 741 with dysentery. Intestinal infection is said to be widespread in the flood-affected areas but there is no specific report on how many people have so far fallen sick with the disease.

The economic cost of the floods is rising: Manufacturers of readymade garments, Bangladesh's biggest export earner, fear a production loss of up to 75 million dollars, AFP reports.

Oil prices race

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The contract plunged 1.32 dollars on Wednesday, having earlier hit an all-time high 44.34 dollars.

But analysts warned the respite could prove shortlived.

"Onwards and upwards as oil prices head towards 50 dollars," analysts at Barclays Capital told clients.

"The market continues to be dominated by the potential for a severe supply crunch as global oil demand swings up towards its seasonal peak," they added.

Prices had dived on Wednesday after Russian Justice Ministry officials said Yukos could use previously frozen bank accounts to keep running on a daily basis and pay off back taxes.

And the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries said that it had surplus production capacity of up to 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) immediately available.

"OPEC continues to hold, at present, a spare production capacity of around 1-1.5 million bpd, which would allow for an immediate additional increase in production," the OPECNA news service quoted OPEC President Purnomo Yusgiantoro as saying in a statement.

"Furthermore, in response to expected future demand growth in the coming years, member countries have plans in place to further increase

militias. We have enough power and enough strength to stop and kick those people out from the country," he said.

He said Iraqi security forces had captured "many groups" linked with alleged Al-Qaeda operative Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi and "other movements aimed at destroying Iraq".