

Terror alerts 'grim reminder' of threats facing US: Bush

AFP, *Kennebunkport*

President George W. Bush yesterday called new terror warnings in Washington and the New York area "grim reminders" of threats facing the United States, as he again defended his government's decision to increase the threat alert level.

"The elevation of the threat level in New York, New Jersey and Washington, DC is a grim reminder of the dangers we continue to face," Bush said in his weekly radio address.

"Information from arrests in Pakistan, taken together with information gathered by the US intelligence community, indicated that al-Qaeda has cased financial targets in New York, New Jersey and Washington, DC, and has recently updated their targeting information," he said.

"This information was buttressed by other information we already had," added Bush, who is spending the weekend with his family in the northeastern state of Maine.

The Bush administration's decision to raise the terror alert at financial companies and organisations in New York, Washington and New Jersey has been criticized because of its reliance on intelligence preceding the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Bush aides initially acknowledged that most of the information that led to the alerts earlier this week pre-dated the September 11

attacks, then claimed that new data had led to the heightened security measures.

The Republican president is running neck-and-neck in the polls against Democratic Senator John Kerry, who is challenging Bush in the November 2 election.

"My most solemn duty as president is to protect our country, and in the three years since our country was attacked, we have taken important steps to overcome terrorist threats to this nation," said Bush, who on Friday had already defended the decision to raise the terror alert.

In his radio address, Bush noted his decision this week to support the creation of a national intelligence czar, a new position proposed in a report by the commission that investigated September 11.

2 more abducted in Kawkhali, 7 freed on pledge of ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Two men were abducted yesterday from remote Panchhari area under Kawkhali upazila, raising the number of abducted people in last week from the district to 13.

A group of 10 armed men raided the houses of Mongol Kumar Chakma and Subesh Chakma (age were not specified) in the early morning and took them away at gunpoint, according to police sources. The motive behind the abduction could not be ascertained immediately.

Meanwhile, on condition of paying ransom, abductors on Friday noon released seven of the 10 people abducted from hard-to-reach Dabua Bazaar, local sources said.

The seven were released Friday following a deal that local negotiators struck with the abductors, according to which they kept the remaining three as hostages until they get the agreed ransom of Tk 7 lakh. The abductors also have threatened to kill the hostages if military troops make any operation against them or if the ransom is not paid by the deadline -- today.

Sources said abductors have demanded Tk 5 lakh for the seven released and Tk 2 lakh for the rest.

Two of the hostages are Mong Chi Aung Choudhury, 24, and Pai Rui Karbary, 55, both brothers of Fatikhari Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Sui Mong Choudhury. His sister's husband Hula Pui Marma, 30, is the third hostage.

The seven who were freed from captivity are local UP member Aung Chi Thoi, 27, Pai Aung Marma, 40, Mong Cha Marma, Aung Ja Rui Marma, 36, U Chi Mong Marma, 36, Pai Tui Aung Marma, 30, and Hla Cha Mong Marma, 22.

Meanwhile, Bhubonjoy Chakma, 32, abducted from Ananda Bihar area of Rangamati last Monday, was freed after payment of Tk 50,000 in ransom from the town's Asambosti area Thursday night, sources close to his family said.

Unknown terrorists abducted him from a shop in Ananda Bihar where he works as a salesman.

'Pichchi' Hannan

FROM PAGE 12

Hannan's eldest daughter Irin Akhter told newsmen at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Irin also alleged that the lawmaker phoned on several occasions to persuade her father to work for him. "When my father refused he threatened to kill him," said the 15-year-old, a class ten student of Dhanmondi School and Development Institute.

"We'll plead with the prime minister to bring the killer of my father to justice," Irin said.

She also alleged that after her father's arrest, her mother Dalia Begum gave Tk 5 lakh to some Rab members so that they do not torture her father.

A top official seeking anonymity described the allegation as baseless and a blatant lie.

Rab arrested Hannan from a clinic at Savar on June 26. Since then he named a number of people including a minister, some lawmakers, a ward commissioner and some political leaders to have harboured him all along his rise to the pinnacle of criminal underworld.

However, none of those people implicated by Hannan has so far been arrested or quizzed.

Meanwhile, the body of 'Pichchi' Hannan' was handed over to her daughter at around 8:00pm yesterday.

After wandering around the morgue for about an hour, Irin and her uncle gave their identities to police and morgue officials and demanded the body.

The hospital authorities, however, handed over the body after getting clearance from Rab.

Earlier, Dr Noor Hossain, lecturer of Forensic Medicine Department of the DMCH conducted the autopsy for an hour starting from 12 noon yesterday.

Morgue sources said the doctor removed a bullet from Hannan's head.

DB constable suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A constable of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) was suspended yesterday for extorting toll from drug peddlers and neglect of duty.

The suspension orders of constable Abdul Hashem of Detective Branch (DB) of Police were given by KMP Commissioner Shaikh Sajjad Ali. Hashem has been closed to Boyra Police Lines.

KMP sources said Hashem used to maintain close link with drug traffickers and muggers and realise toll from small traders of Khulna Bazar threatening them to implicate in false cases.

Twenty small traders of Khulna Bazar on Tuesday submitted a petition to the KMP commissioner against Hashem.

When asked, the KMP commissioner said he has launched a crackdown on the drug peddlers, adding, no-one having links with them will be spared from legal action.

Earlier, two police sub-inspectors and three constables were suspended and closed to the police lines on Wednesday for dining with some drug traffickers.

Illegal structures

FROM PAGE 1

Ahmed, also commissioner of Dhaka division, to submit the reports of all presiding officers.

The RO, who earlier submitted the reports of 70 presiding officers to the High Court, is likely to submit a document on the basis of the manipulated reports in a couple of days.

One of the presiding officers is currently abroad.

The High Court will hear the case on August 22.

One of the presiding officers who was forced to change his report said he submitted his report to the RO on July 20, saying he did not see any army man at this polling centre.

But the RO rejected his report and asked him to prepare a fresh one stating that he saw army men at the centre.

"We, 13 presiding officers, went to the deputy election commissioner's office on August 3 and he asked us to submit fresh reports. As suggested by him, we wrote about army deployment in our centres," another presiding officers said.

Deputy Election Commissioner of Dhaka Division Abul Kashem denied the allegation and said he never asked any presiding officer to come up with reports on the by-election.

He, however, admitted that a few

Santosh Gupta

FROM PAGE 1

Parliament and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina paid tribute by placing floral wreaths on the coffin.

She prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed her sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Dhaka City Mayor Shadek Hossain Khoka, former mayor Mohammad Hanif, AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, former justice KM Sobhan, former vice chancellor of Dhaka University AK Azad Chowdhury, DUTA President AAMS Arefin Siddique and General Secretary Aktaruzzaman, former vice chancellor of National University Durgadas Bhattacharya, Ramendu Mujumdar, singers Rathindra Nath Ray, Fakir Alamgir, daily Sangbad Editor Bazlur Rahman, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, and Laila Kabir, among others, were present.

Sammilito Sanskritik Jote, Awami Jubo League, Bangladesh Communist Party, 11-Party, Muktiyuddha Oikya Parishad, Bangabandhu Lolkala Academy, Sammilito Nagarik Samaj, Muktiyuddha Jadughar, Kendriya Khelaghar, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, Karmajibi Nari were among the organisations that paid homage to Santosh.

At 1:00pm the body was taken to the crematorium in Postagola.

2 Ctg robbers

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In Raozan, an angry mob beat an alleged extortionist to death at around 5:30am at Baro Thakurpara under East Guzra union.

The dead was identified as Mosharraf, 25.

Police said Mosharraf along with eight accomplices went to the village to extort money. But the villagers chased them and caught Mosharraf to beat him dead on the spot. Other criminals managed to escape.

Two separate cases were filed.

Extra \$45m

FROM PAGE 1

BSS district correspondents and roving journalists said despite acute food shortage at places, people were seen sharing their meals with domestic animals and even street dogs, which were forced to share the same shelters with the marooned.

Hydrologists and meteorologists have cautioned against another spate of deluge that may hit Bangladesh later this month in line with the country's regular pattern but expressed the hope that by then the current deluge level would recede further reducing fears of massive floods.

Acting on a tip off, police busted the hornets' nest deep in the Hathazari hills on June 1 last and arrested two persons named M Iskander and Enamul Huq, while the rest of the militants managed to flee.

The same day, police busted another arms training camp at

IMF sets fresh

FROM PAGE 1
Agrani will have new management team led by a Bangladeshi chief executive officer by the end of the month.

As for Sonali Bank, the largest NCB with a 17 percent market share, it is to be corporatised and brought to the point where a minority shareholding can be divested over the medium term. The IMF is against an early partial divestment of Sonali considering Sonali's central role in the provision of treasury functions and essential banking services for the rural sector.

The government has been asked to appoint a chief executive officer to Sonali Bank and reconstitute its board of directors on the basis of 'fit and proper test' by next month.

"The reforms are on-going (in line with the IMF conditions) and these will be continued," a high official at the finance ministry told The Daily Star yesterday, asked if the government would be able to complete the reforms in time.

The board of directors of the NCBs would be reconstituted to have only directors qualified as 'fit and proper'

RO to submit document

FROM PAGE 1

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Confessors retract

FROM PAGE 1

where three policemen beat me up after the zero hours," Kalu said in his retraction petition.

"They informed me that I along with my gang had set fire to the BRTC bus near Sheraton Hotel under the direction of Awami League leaders, and asked me to confess the same before the magistrate," he narrated.

"When I said that I was in remand and in jail custody from June 3 to 8, they began inhuman torture on men and threatened to kill me unless I follow their directives."

Kalu claimed he acted on police instructions to save his life: "What I told in the court was not my statement. I've said what police asked me to say."

Masum, in his petition, told the court, "Arresting me in the bus arson case on July 10, police ordered me to state some names before the magistrate, otherwise, they threatened to cripple me and implicate my family members in criminal cases."

He gave in to police torture and followed their instructions to save himself and his family, Masum said.

Metropolitan Magistrate Jahangir Alam took the petitions on record.

Police, meanwhile, filed a petition yesterday for a five-day remand of Kalu for further interrogation, which Kalu's lawyers opposed and the court rejected.

The court also turned down pleas to give bail to the two.

Police arrested Kalu on Topkhana Road on June 2 night in a mugging case filed the previous day by Anwar Hossain, a worker of Raihan Auto Accessories at Bijoyagar, and produced him before the CMM Court with a five-day remand petition.

"The court granted a one-day remand. We interrogated him on June 4 at Ramna Police Station and produced him before the court on the following day," said SI Shamsul Haq, investigation officer of the case.

Kalu was freed on bail on June 8, but

Household goods

FROM PAGE 12

Islamist zealots.

Police returned empty handed from all their raids on probable hideouts of the absconders including the one at Patiya Madrasa. Police officials said they have engaged spies to dig out information on whereabouts of the three.

"The real culprits behind the incident might have bribed him to make such a statement to 'damage merit of the case'," the DB chief maintained, adding, "He might have used a false name and address."

Clashes broke out shortly after dawn when around 25 army jeeps and tanks pushed into the town and surrounded a number of houses, the sources said, and witnesses reported hearing several loud explosions.

The army confirmed the four arrests in Tulukarem, but said only one of them belonged to Al Aqsa, while the other three were operatives from the radical Hamas movement.

A spokeswoman said troops had uncovered a weapons cache hidden in one of the Hamas activists' homes, containing 19 explosive devices, a rifle and ammunition.

under the Bangladesh Bank guidelines and at least two board members would have to have recognised financial or banking experience.

The IMF has stressed the need for greater autonomy of the NCBs in human resource policy. It calls for a review of the policies on branch rationalisation and human resource relating to hiring, promoting, firing, staff compensation and instituting voluntary retirement schemes (VRS). The NCBs should also be given maximum autonomy in making decisions.

The new private owners or strategic investors of the banks, once divested, would need to have significant banking expertise, management capabilities and a credible track record.

They would also have to be prepared to put forward a significant amount of their own capital, as a condition of sale.

The government would not entertain bids that require regulatory forbearance for minimum capital adequacy.

presiding officers visited him without being asked by him.

Assistant Returning Officer Shamsul Alam also dismissed the allegation, saying 70 presiding officers submitted their reports and they were sent to the High Court.

"As the High Court asked to submit the complete report, the returning officer's office collected the remaining 32 presiding officer's report."

Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali said presiding officers, who work inside a polling centre, are not supposed to see army deployment.

"The Election Commission has already submitted its report to the High Court stating that army personnel were not deployed in the by-election in line with the court orders."

On a writ petition filed by Mannan, the High Court directed the government to deploy army in each polling centre in line with the Election Commission recommendation.

Most poll watchers said they did not see army personnel deployed at polling centres.

police arrested him again at Golap Shah Mazar in Gulistan on July 27.

Police arrested Masum on July 10 morning in Gulistan area and produced him before Metropolitan Magistrate Shaqiq Anwar the same day where he confessed to the arson. He told the magistrate that Jubo League President Jahangir Kabir Nanak and General Secretary Mirza Azam, AL leader Sayeed Khokon and pro-AL transport workers' leader Ruhul Amin alias Boro Mia gave them money and a bag of powder to set fire to a bus.

He, Kalu and four others sprayed the powder by syringe and set fire to it, he said.

Police produced Kalu before the same magistrate on July 28 where he said four of them sprayed the powder by pichkari (sprayer).

The loophole-ridden statements of both Kalu and Masum go in line with the ones the police officers made immediately after the incident linking the AL to the arson.

DB chief Faruq Ahmed strongly denied Kalu and Masum's allegation of police torture to extract confessional statements.

He said, "Police are no party in recording confessional statements. The two made it on their own before the magistrate."

When asked how Kalu, who was in police custody from June 2 to 5, could set fire to the bus on June 4, Ahmed admitted that he might have given a false statement.

"The real culprits behind the incident might have bribed him to make such a statement to 'damage merit of the case'," the DB chief maintained, adding, "He might have used a false name and address."

Antioxidants don't protect heart of male smokers

REUTERS, *New York*

Neither vitamin E nor beta-carotene supplements protect male smokers against heart disease. The antioxidants may actually be harmful, cardiologists report in the European Heart Journal.

The findings come from a follow-up study of a Finnish trial that originally looked into the prevention of cancer using vitamin E and/or beta-carotene in men who smoked.

Specifically, over 29,000 male smokers between 50 and 69 years of age were randomly assigned to take one or other of the antioxidants or both or a placebo for 5 to 8 years.

At the end of the trial 23,000 of the men remained at risk for a first-ever major coronary "event," while another 1255 had had heart attack and were at risk for a second event.

During the 6-year period after the trial ended, a total of 2059 first-ever major coronary events were recorded, about half of which were fatal.

According to the trial investigators, vitamin E supplementation had no significant impact during the post-trial period on first-ever major coronary events, similar to observations made during the trial period.

Beta-carotene supplementation, on the other hand, increased the risk for major coronary events by 14 percent.

"These findings of beta-carotene were unexpected," the team points out, "since no increased risk was observed during the trial period." This may be a chance finding, they suggest.

Nonetheless, the researchers say these data on the late effects of vitamin E and beta-carotene argue against their use by male smokers for the prevention of coronary heart disease.

UPDF men

FROM PAGE 1

of Morottu Tripura, is from Matrianga in Khagrachhari.

A special team of armed forces raided terrorist hideouts in Gorgojachhari area near Khagrachhari town following a lead in the early hours of Friday. They faced resistance from the terrorists, who opened fire on them at around 3:00 am. The army team returned fire and at one stage nabbed two of the terrorists. The others, however, managed to escape in the dense jungle, sources said.

Immediately after extracting some information from the two arrested, armymen combed the area and seized two SMGs, two home-made guns, three rifles, 15 bullets, eight sets of fatigues, 29 pieces of blankets, stationery, 12 yards of electric wire, eight information registers, diary of a top UPDF leader, seven dossiers and drugs worth about Tk 5000, sources said.

The arrested were handed over to police, who later sent them to court, said Assistant Sub Inspector Obaidullah yesterday.

Non-government

FROM PAGE 12

week of a month but the teachers did not get salary benefits of June and July even in the first week of August.

The BCUTA in a statement has urged the government to disburse the benefits immediately.

When contacted, Education Secretary Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi said the delay occurred due to the end of the fiscal year.

"Orders in this regard have been issued and the teachers are expected to get their salaries in two days," he added.

2 Palestinian

FROM PAGE 12

The second was taken for investigation.

The youth's death brought to 4,222 the overall toll since the September 2000 launch of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, including 3,225 Palestinians and 926 Israelis, according to an AFP tally.

Four Palestinian militants from the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades were arrested by Israeli troops early Saturday during an army incursion in the northern West Bank town of Tulukarem, Palestinian security sources reported.

One of them was named as Abud Shreim, 28, the Tulukarem area leader of the Brigades, a group which is loosely allied to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

Clashes broke out shortly after dawn when around 25 army jeeps and tanks pushed into the town and surrounded a number of houses, the sources said, and witnesses reported hearing several loud explosions.

The army confirmed the four arrests in Tulukarem, but said only one of them belonged to Al Aqsa, while the other three were operatives from the radical Hamas movement.

A spokeswoman said troops had uncovered a weapons cache hidden in one of the Hamas activists' homes, containing 19 explosive devices, a rifle and ammunition.

India bans religious riot movie

BBC, *Undated*

Award-winning documentary Final Solution, which looks at religious rioting between Hindus and Muslims, has been banned in India.

The film follows 2002 clashes in the western state of Gujarat, which left more than 1,000 people dead.

A censor board said the documentary was "highly provocative and may trigger off unrest and communal violence".

The movie was honoured at the Berlin Film Festival. Director Rakesh Sharma plans to challenge the ruling in court.

"National integration"

India's Central Board of Film Certification imposed a comprehensive ban on the film's public screening, stating: "State security is jeopardised and public order is endangered if this film is shown."

"The board also says that the film will

affect friendly relations with some neighbouring countries and that the film attacked the basic principle of the Indian constitution, which is national integration," director Sharma told the BBC.

"People who make hate speeches should be banned and not the film-maker who records it," he said.

Final Solution follows the riots which broke out after 59 Hindus were killed in an arson attack on a train in February 2002, blamed on a Muslim mob.

It won the documentary and critics awards at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and the Wolfgang Staude and Special Jury awards at the Berlin International Film Festival.

But the film was not permitted a screening at the Singapore film festival in May, after its censor board deemed it "potentially inflammatory".

SC asks govt to specify

FROM PAGE 1

expedited. Ariff added.

As the SC bench asked Ariff how long it would take for the government to separate the judiciary from the executive, Ariff replied, "We want the necessary four months at the moment, but only the law ministry can tell us how long it would take after those months."

The court then asked Ariff to return to it after learning of a specific timeframe from the law ministry within 10 days.

Lawyer for the petitioner, Barrister Amir Ul Islam, reminded the bench of the contempt of court petition filed against the government for not meeting the previous deadline set by the SC and suggested the hearing on the contempt petition take place immediately.

The court told him it would look into the matter on completion of the process of implementation of the directives for separation of the judiciary.