



Battles rage around Najaf shrine

Top Shia leader back in Iraq; 4 killed in US airstrikes; 'spy' beheaded

AGENCIES, Najaf

Iraq's most influential Shia leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has returned after medical treatment in Britain as fighting continues to rage in the Shia holy city of Najaf yesterday.

As helicopter gunships clatter over Najaf and sniper fire crackles through the alleyways, US soldiers say they are forcing Shia rebels to retreat to the

Imam Ali shrine.

US troops moved to within 20 metres (yards) of the gates of the shrine, an AFP reporter witnessed early yesterday.

The closest US vehicle stopped just 20 metres from the gate of the mosque compound, where Shia Muslim militiamen loyal to radical cleric Moqtada Sadr are operating.

Makeshift barricades set up to protect the entrance to the complex

were torched, and the heavy boom of artillery fire thundered out across the area as flames licked upwards into the early morning sky.

Tanks could also be seen moving about 80 metres from the gate, heading along the western side of the compound wall towards the surrounding Old City.

US fire pummelled all main roads leading from the gates into the Old

FBCCI for political talks to restore normalcy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Condemning Saturday's grenade attack on the Awami League (AL) rally in the capital, the country's apex trade body has called for initiating an 'open and frank dialogue' between the top leaders of the two major political parties to put an end to the panicky situation and bring back normalcy.

At an emergency meeting yesterday, the board of directors of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) resolved that continued talks especially between the chiefs of the two major political

Observer editor gets death threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury received an anonymous death threat mail on Tuesday.

The sender, who did not mention his address on the white envelope, indicated he sides with some fundamentalist group and Rajakars (collaborators).

"Dr Humayun Azad, where are you now? You wanted to free the country of fundamentalists and Rajakars. Have you succeeded? No," reads the letter with 'red signal' scripted on the upper right side.

"Even Bangabandhu failed to do it. No-one will," added the letter, sent to the daily's Motijheel office.

Warning Iqbal, also president of Bangladesh Federal Union of

Twin plane crashes kill 90 in Russia

Terrorist strike feared

REUTERS, Moscow

Two Russian passenger planes crashed almost simultaneously late Tuesday killing all 90 on board, and security officials said they were investigating a possible terrorist attack.

The planes disappeared from air traffic controllers' radar screens within minutes of each other and one, carrying 46 passengers and crew, sent a hijack alarm before crashing near the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don.

President Vladimir Putin ordered the FSB security service to investigate the crashes, which came before Sunday's presidential election in Chechnya where rebel separatists have threatened to disrupt the polls with violence.

"The fact that both planes took off from one airport and disappeared from radars around the same time can show it was a planned action," the Interfax news agency quoted an aviation source as

McKinnon calls AL chief to know her condition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon yesterday phoned Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina and inquired about her condition after the Saturday's attempt on her life.

He offered condolences to the victims in the series of grenade attacks in the Bangabandhu Avenue carnage, which left 19 people including AL leader Ivy Rahman killed and over 200 others injured.

"Mr McKinnon expressed his shock and outrage at the assassination attempt on her and inquired about her health," Hasina's Political



Stranded passengers wait at Tejgaon Rail Station after railway authorities suspended train service on Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Sylhet routes till 1:00pm yesterday on security grounds.

Biometric checks on visitors to US from Jan 1

AP, Buffalo, New York

Foreigners entering the United States across the busiest borders will be photographed and electronically fingerprinted beginning January 1 with the goal of flushing out potential terrorists.

The 'biometric checks' will be used on travellers with visas and those under the visa-waiver programme, which lets citizens from 27 nations that are US allies enter the country without a visa, said James Williams, the programme's director on Tuesday.

"We want people to come to this country, to our house. But we want to know why they're coming, and we want to know did they leave on time," he said.



An investigator sifts through debris at Saturday's blast site on Bangabandhu Avenue for evidence.

Rangpur arson victims live under sky

Pakistani citizen was among raiders on Hindus

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

Members of the eight Hindu families who suffered the Monday's arson and plunder at Adam Sarkerpara village under Pargachha upazila in the district continue to live under the open sky, exposed to the elements including rains.

Their houses were burnt to ashes by a group of 35 to 40 armed mobsters linked to the ruling BNP in a raid on the remote village. The bandits torched 22 houses of minority Hindus, injured 20 villagers and looted their cash, crops and cattle.

Police said the victims filed a case with Pargachha Police Station accusing 21 including former Sawla Union

Rajin to lead Tigers in England

Team leaves today

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajin Saleh will lead Bangladesh in next month's ICC Champions Trophy in England.

The Bangladesh team leave for the British Isles today morning.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced Saleh as makeshift skipper following a meeting in the

Rejoinder and our reply

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) yesterday in a rejoinder disagreed with some facts of the report The Daily Star ran on Wednesday under the headline 'BJP, IOI leaders refuse to refute comments'.

The rejoinder signed by its Office Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said there was no discussion about the talks between the prime minister and BJP chairman at an emergency meeting of the party on August 23. It did not discuss about dropping

Prayer Timing		
August 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		