

6 killed in air strike on Fallujah

AFP, Fallujah

US forces killed at least six Iraqis in raids on the insurgent bastion of Fallujah yesterday as Iraq's hostage crisis took a worrying new twist with the capture of two Italian aid workers in the heart of Baghdad.

Fighter jets and helicopters pounded Fallujah all night in reprisal for attacks by radical militants on US positions near the restive city.

The US military said up to 100 militants were killed in the strikes, but medical sources in Fallujah had only reported six dead and 23 wounded. A US soldier was also killed overnight near the town of Balad north of Baghdad when a roadside bomb hit his convoy, the army said, bringing the total number of servicemen killed since the start of the war to 1,002.

Govt seeks

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Babar said a vested quarter was responsible for bomb hoaxes across Bangladesh to upset peace.

He resented the failure to find out the culprits and directed the authorities to employ full strength at the filed level to hunt down criminals.

A special awareness programme will be taken in educational institutions, community centres, markets and different establishments to tackle bomb and bomb threats, meeting sources said.

The home ministry decisions came in the wake of a spate of grenade attacks and threats in Dhaka, Sylhet and launches in the river.

Unnamed callers in Dhaka threatened to blow up Dhaka University, big installations like Sena Kalyan Bhaban, schools and media offices.

Anonymous callers in Sylhet threatened to tear down Osmani International Airport and Radio office and some educational institutions last month.

Soon after the grisly grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka on August 21, live grenades were seized from Railway Supermarket at Gulistan and Dhaka Central Jail.

A powerful bomb explosion in Sylhet on Monday claimed two lives and a 10 kg antitank shell was seized from the kitchen of one of the victims on Tuesday.

Interpol experts and local investigators collected names and addresses of 13 of 22 suspects of the August 21 grenade attacks and handed over the list of the 13 to BDR on Tuesday night asking them to keep an eye on them to stop their escape.

Mukul figured high on the list of grenade attack suspects in the review of the AL rally bombing footage. The attack killed 19 people, including AL's Women's Affairs Secretary Iy Rahman and injured over 200 others.

The sources did not give the name of other suspects.

JP lawmaker walks barefoot, shirtless in protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A Jatiya Party (Ershad) legislator yesterday visited different polling centres of the municipality election at Haragachh in Rangpur barefoot and shirtless to protest an attack on him.

Karim Uddin Bharasa, also JP district unit president, took the symbolic manner of protest against the attack allegedly by ruling alliance cadres on Monday.

Karim in the morning at Haragachh College centre told reporters that the cadres of the alliance government instructed by BNP leader Rahim Uddin Bharasa, also his elder brother, assaulted him and tore his shirt Monday evening. He was in procession campaigning for his candidate Anwarul Hoque Maya.

Giving reason to his exceptional protest, he said, "The cadres won't be able to tear my shirt this time. I haven't put on shoes to run away quickly if they attack me again. Above all, I want to set a protest against Monday's incident."

On the election, he said it was not free and fare and alleged massive vote rigging at different centres.

Businessman

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instruction after the family paid ransom.

An underground gang abducted Liton, son of Mujibur Rahman of Nohordia village, on August 30 on his way home at about 9:00pm from a local bazaar.

Abductors beat businessman Siraj Ali, 35, a timber trader of Ballaypur Bazaar, to death in Sontoshpur village in Sadar upazila on Tuesday night. The police said they recovered the body of Siraj.

Siraj of Sugandhipur village was living in his in-laws' house at Ballaypur and had been missing since Monday, his family said.

Police believe Siraj was abducted by the gangsters who earlier demanded Tk 50,000 in toll and threatened to kill him otherwise, while returning home from the bazaar at night. Police sent the body to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

The police could not rescue Jhenidah farmer Sunil Kumar Mondol of Mohisdanga village in Saikupa upazila, abducted on Friday.

Agang in the guise of police at night called the 50-year-old out of sleep and demanded Tk 2 lakh from his family after abducting him at gunpoint.

Police said they were trying to rescue the farmer.

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS Move to train 15,000 sacked or retired men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 15,000 industrial workers either sacked or given voluntary retirement during the current fiscal year will be provided with training and Tk 75,000 in loans each as income-generating measures for their rehabilitation.

The decision to rehabilitate the workers was taken yesterday at a high-level review meeting on Tk 900-crore allocation under the current budget for four other funds and two agriculture sector support programmes.

The meeting held at the finance ministry was chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman.

Under the present government, about 70,000 workers have been relieved of jobs from various industries, a massive chunk of them -- 28,000 -- from the now-defunct state-owned Adamjee Jute Mills.

An amount of Tk 30 crore has been put aside for the rehabilitation programme in the current budget, of which the finance ministry has already released Tk 15 crore.

The programme is to be coordinated by the labour and employment ministry under which Karmasangsthan Bank will provide the loans to the workers.

Tk 20 crore has been allocated for training and further employment of a large number of ready-made garments (RMG) workers who are under the threat of losing jobs after the impending end of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA).

The commerce ministry has already sent a draft work-plan to the finance ministry to coordinate the RMG workers' compensation plan, which is currently under consideration.

The current budget allocated Tk 100 crore for setting up new agriculture-based industries. The loan interest rate will be eight percent and the debt-equity ratio 70:30, yesterday's meeting decided.

The finance division has already assigned four banks to disburse the already released Tk 50 crore in agro-based industrial loans. The banks are Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, Basic Bank and Karmasangsthan Bank.

Eight state-owned banks and financial institutions have been set a target to disburse Tk 5,463 crore, 48 percent higher than last fiscal year's disbursement of Tk 3,700 crore in agriculture loans.

Gas runs dry

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months and I don't see an end to this."

Abul Hossain, manager of the factory, said they are getting only 2 PSI gas supply but they need 15 PSI.

"We are unable to pay wages to our 500 workers as there has been no production in our factory in the last two months," Hossain said. "If there is no production, how can we pay wages to our workers?"

National Glass Factory, Jupiter Glass Factory and Khawja Re-rolling Mills are among the major gas-run factories.

Factory officials said they had given 40 letters to the Titas Gas authorities informing them of the gas crisis in the BSCIC area but the crisis yet to be solved.

Officials at Tongi Regional Office of Titas Gas attributed the situation to increase in the demand for gas over the last few years.

"Usually the gas crisis in BSCIC area emerges in winter due to some technical problems but this year the problem has cropped up ahead of winter as the supply of gas from the national grid line is low," said Fakrul Islam, Tongi regional manager.

There is little possibility of any improvement in the situation before December, he thought.

PM assures

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"reaching out to schoolchildren" for those deprived of education. The Tk 400 crore six-year-long project will help 20 lakh such students complete their primary schooling.

She also mentioned the "hard to reach" programme taken up for training of the deprived working children and youths at the divisional level.

Referring to the government's programme of ensuring primary education for every child and reducing dropouts, the prime minister reminded that attendance at schools increased as an outcome.

Presided over by Prime Minister's Adviser for Primary and Mass Education Prof Jahanaara Begum, the function was also addressed by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Rafiqul Islam and Director General of the Directorate of Primary Education and Project Director of PDEP-II ABM Abdus Sattar.

Ministers, members of parliament, representatives of donor agencies and a large number of academics were present at the function.

Bomb spree leads

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The vehicles at the main gate. Official sources said police with hand-held metal detectors are stationed at all staircases and elevator landings in all buildings on the Secretariat premises, along with security men with such detectors on every floor and armed police alongside the walls.

To ensure security police have closed and locked several additional gates of different buildings and strictly check all the bags carried in by officials, staffs and visitors.

The authorities have also instructed the officials concerned to restrict the number of passes they issue to avoid excessive visitors. They restriction has brought in a deserted look in the Secretariat now a days.

Sources also said police and paramilitary forces have been put on red alert across the capital following the frequent bomb threats on different offices and academic institutions. Babar has instructed intelligence and law enforcing agencies including the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to launch a meticulous manhunt to nab those involved in the threats, they added.

They said all police stations and intelligence agencies have been directed to maintain a keen eye on academic institutions, specially the

schools, in the city in relation to bomb threats. Additional police forces are stationed in Dhanmondi, the hub of English medium schools, and other areas to avert any untoward incidents.

Verdict on case

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(Bac) filed the case with Ramna Police Station accusing Ershad and three tax officials on July 27, 1992.

The Prime Minister's Office gave Bac the nod to press charge against Ershad on November 30, 1992. It also decided to exempt the taxmen from the case.

It was alleged that Ershad, while he was in power, paid Tk 7,43,416 as income tax for six years (1983-1989). Later, he withdrew Tk 2,76,324 without submitting any document in favour of his action.

The investigation officer of the case submitted charge sheet stating Ershad as the lone accused on December 19, 1992. The three tax officials were shown as prosecution witnesses.

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

Chargesheeted accused

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in the absence of the judge may create legal tangles.

The court scheduled the hearing on the chargesheet for October 10 when the new judge will take office left vacant by the recent transfer of Judge Fazul Karim.

Bail prayers were submitted for eight of the 43 accused and the court sanctioned the bail prayer for Morium and left the rest for an interim hearing, the date of which will be fixed later.

The first chargesheet on the arms case was submitted on June 11 showing 39 people as accused with a prayer for exclusion of three, but the court rejected the prayer for exclusion and ordered inclusion of another person, raising the number of the accused to 43 in the supplementary chargesheet.

SUSPECTED LINKS

Arrested by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on his arrival from Singapore, Shaifur Rahman was handed to Khulsi police before he was sent to Dhaka last night for

quizzing at the joint interrogation cell.

Rab seized foreign banknotes and 11 passports from Shaifur, also believed to have links to the murder of ship breaker Jakir, police said.

Rab said he has roles in international smuggling and illegal money transfer, besides his suspected links to the biggest arms haul.

10 jails run

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disruption if the jail superintendent remains absent for a couple days as other officers may do his work. But a jail cannot be run without a jailer who works round the clock," said a senior official of Dhaka Central Jail.

There are complaints of neglect of inspections of the wards and cells, in attending the inmates' objections and irregularities in managing visitors, said some jail staffs.

Sources said the authorities failed to appoint new jailers for want of competent officers.

Unlawful recruitment

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the vice chancellor that he alone decided to recruit 10 teachers as rest of the planning committee members were absent in the August 2 meeting, the four CSTPC members alleged.

Based on the Chisti's letter dated August 8, the RU Syndicate in its August 22 meeting ordered publication of advertisements for the recruitment.

The four CSTPC members in their written complaint to the registrar said any recruitment was unnecessary in the department as there is already one teacher for every 10 students and as it would only enrage the temporarily hired teachers.

They also alleged last year six teachers were recruited in the department violating rules in the same way and later it was found that the six were relatives of some pro-ruling coalition teachers and the department chairman.

The six teachers appointed last year include Shersedul Arefin, nephew-in-law of Chisti, Quamrul Hasan, son-in-law of pro-BNP Prof Ibrahim Hossain, ANK Noman, brother of pro-Jamaat teacher NK Zaman, Moksaddul Haq, son of Prof Mozammel Haque of Physics department, and Anisuzzaman

Siddik, son-in-law of Open University Pro-VC Prof Abdur Razzak.

When contacted, Chisti denied the allegations, saying, "I did what I found to be right," and advised The Daily Star to contact the RU registrar for information on the issue.

RU Registrar Prof Abdus Salam said he received complaints from the CSTPC members and the university authorities would look into the matter.

Mutilated

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quoted her daughter as telling the criminals as they were leaving, which made them furious.

They chopped her in the neck and left her there, thinking she was dead. But when they came back on August 24 to check, they found her alive. She asked them for drinking water, but they poured acid on her body instead, she said.

Family members denied the rape of the housewife but said she became unconscious from stabs and cannot remember if they assaulted her afterwards.

A gardener found her three days into the incident and she asked him to save her, but he ran away, taking her to be a ghost.

JS to see stormy

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Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star on Sunday.

The question of participating in the Netrokona-2 parliamentary by-election scheduled for October 9 will also be decided at the same time. The last date of filing nomination for the seat that fell vacant at the death of AL lawmaker Abdul Momin is September 14.

If the party joins the session, its lawmakers will stage vigorous protests against the grisly grenade attack and will create pressure on the ruling coalition to adopt the censure motion.

It will also demand discussions on food rehabilitation and price hike of essentials among other things, sources in the party said.

"We have not formerly discussed the issue of joining parliament. But our informal discussions up to now suggest that the possibility is very slim," a top AL leader said.

Parliament secretariat sources said the offices of the speaker and the deputy speaker were collecting facts about the duration of post-budget sessions.

"History shows that the post-budget sessions in the last ten years were limited to 2 to 10 workdays. The duration of the upcoming session will be fixed considering the previous facts," a senior official said.

Govt staff to own flats on monthly deposit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved a Tk 57 crore project to build 500 modern apartments in Mohammadpur and Lalmatia under the housing and public works ministry for government officials.

Government officials will own the apartments, each 1,000 square feet, worth Tk 14.5 lakh and to be handed over by June 2005 on loans that will be repaid by their monthly government-house-rent allowance.

The project was approved at a meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecneec) at the National Economic Council, with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair.

Seven other projects worth Tk 693 crore under various ministries were also approved in the Ecneec meeting, with another Tk 364 crore in project aid.

Satkhira AL leaders get death-threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

An Islamist outfit, Hekmat Jihad, in letters yesterday threatened three Satkhira district Awami League (AL) leaders with death.

The AL leaders are Satkhira district AL convening committee members: former lawmaker Monsur Ahmed, Sheikh Abu Nasim Moim and Sadar thana AL President Sina Shawkat Hossain.

The fundamentalist group sent letters by post to the AL leaders declaring them kaffir (infidels) and branded them as their enemies who are hampering their organisational activities.

A decision to punish the leaders was taken at a meeting, also joined by the self-styled district commander of Hikmat Jihad.

One of the panic-gripped AL leaders said he would file a general diary with Satkhira Police Station today.

Unite on one

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parties to formulate a declaration incorporating basic problems facing the country now and their solution.

Former president and chief of the Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said people are now united for a change of the government but the political parties are divided.

He called for national unity under corruption and violence-free leadership.

The BDB chief said his party is ready to prepare a "people's manifesto" incorporating demands and aspirations of the people to change the government.

Referring to huge arms hauls and bomb blasts in the country in the last three years, Badruddoza said the present government should resign immediately. National security and democracy are at stake under it, he added.

Dr Kamal Hossain said fundamentalist elements are gaining strength under government patronisation. It is not possible to root out these communal forces without united movement, he felt.

"We were united during the liberation war and once again we should be united with that spirit to fight against the present government", Kamal said.

Supporting the one-point movement to oust the government, Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim stressed inclusion of some more points in the movement programme, including elimination of fundamentalist forces from the country.

"We the political parties are united and it is better to intensify the out-governance movement from the parties' own platforms. Different parties will hit this communal government from different sides," he said.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said, "On the question of unity, we are misguided by ourselves. We should go ahead unitedly with more specific programmes".

Others who spoke included Rokon Uddin Mahmud, president of Supreme Court Bar Association; Mahi B Chowdhury, BSD leader; Khatequzzaman, journalist Ataus Samad, Sultana Kamal of Ain-O-Salish Kendra; Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Ajay Roy, Haji Abdus Samad and Zahurul Islam.

Dravid

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really proud," said Dravid, who was also named Test Player of the Year. "I am so happy to be recognised by some really great people."

The number three batsman, who recently turned his hand to wicketkeeping, received the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for being the best player in both forms of the game in the year to July 31 2004.

England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff was chosen as one-day international Cricketer of the Year, capping a memorable week for the 26-year-old after his partner gave birth to a girl.

Ponting was named captain of both World XIs. Asked who would win if there was a game between the one-day side chosen by the panel and his Australia team, he replied: "Probably just the Aussies by a run or two."

The awards, held at London's Alexandra Palace, were organised to coincide with the ICC Champions Trophy which starts in England on Friday.

Indian left arm seamer Irfan Pathan was named Emerging Player and Simon Taufel won the Best Umpire Award.

Govt to recruit

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366-member independent Marine Police and four new anti-crime units with 167 posts for nine zones in Dhaka Metropolitan area.

Basic pay of Rab members may increase by 100 percent if the finance ministry approves the home ministry's proposal contained in a letter.

Countrywide, the home ministry proposes a new 953-member riot police department for Chittagong Metropolitan Police as well as 183 new posts in Savar, Keraniganj, Fatulla, Siddhirganj, Tongi and Fatikchhari police stations.

Moreover, Tk 85 crore for Rab and police transports and Tk 8 crore for equipment have been proposed with an additional Tk 18 crore in rations for police personnel while residing in barracks.

The home ministry's letter states that the police forces in the country are severely under-manned with only one police for every 1,350 citizens and only 19,800 police personnel in 22 thanas of the capital compared to 58,638 police personnel and 123 thanas in Delhi, a city with similar population as Dhaka's.

Home ministry sources said the proposal was sent after discussions between the secretaries of the two ministries.

The proposal would soon be forwarded to the finance minister for consideration, finance ministry sources said.

Zillur gives

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his wife Ily in the carnage, recalled.

"I was on the left side of 'Netri' (Sheikh Hasina) on the truck when she was delivering her speech," he said adding, "the doomsday descended soon after Sheikh Hasina had finished her speech with 'Joy Bangla' and was about to put her step on the makeshift stairs to get down from the truck.

Zillur said, "the clue to the incident will be unearthed if the government really wants. Otherwise, everything will go in vain."

After giving deposition to the Judicial Commission, Zillur was taken to a clinic for medical check up.

GMG air-links Kolkata

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for the next three flights after inauguration.

Addressing the function on behalf of the minister, Amal Mukherjee, councillor of Dum Dum Municipality, said: "We welcome the GMG airlines to India and hope it will expand to other Indian cities. We also hope it will contribute to boosting trade and tourism between the two neighbouring countries."

GMG flight may prompt early foray to Bangladesh by Indian private carriers -- Jet Airways and Sahara Airlines. "We hope Bangladesh will also welcome two of our private carriers now on hand to explore Bangladesh market," the councillor said.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Hemayetuddin told the function that the GMG operation in India can play an important role in boosting trade and tourism between the countries.

"If communications develop, the trade will improve. Bangladesh and India should be connected with all modes of transport to invigorate trade relations."

Adapting the famous line of first moon conqueror Niel Armstrong, Managing Director of GMG Airlines Shahab Sattar said, "May be this is a small journey but it will surely be a giant leap for the private sector civil aviation in Bangladesh."

"We hope to fly to Delhi, Chennai, Kathmandu, Chiang Mai, Colombo and Male soon after air service agreement with those countries are revised to pave way for GMG's entry."

Earlier at the first inauguration function at Chittagong airport, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin said the government may allow more private airlines to fly overseas and also foreign airlines to gain access to Bangladesh market.

"In the era of globalisation, the government believes in open sky policy. We hope the passengers will benefit from competition arising out of private airline's international operations," he said.

RR Das, minister (economy and commerce) of Indian High Commission in Dhaka, said the GMG's international operation is a milestone in India-Bangladesh relations. "We must facilitate the private sector to make good our economy," he added.

After the inauguration function in Chittagong, GMG flight No. Z5 061 took off from Chittagong airport carrying high officials of the airlines and a group of newspersons. Rokia A Rahman, president of Women Entrepreneurs Association, Bangladesh also got on the flight.

Opposition to announce

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agitation programmes.

The main opposition party termed the 11-party decision a development in the movement to topple the government in the wake of the August 21 assassination attempt on AL chief Sheikh Hasina that left 19 killed.

"We'll keep continuation of the one-point movement to oust the government," Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary of the leader of the opposition, told The Daily Star yesterday.

On the other hand, the left alliance at Tuesday's meeting discussed some agitation programmes including human chain, rally and other demonstrations. If invited, the

left leaders will sit with the AL to fix the agitation programmes, sources said.

Meanwhile, Communist Party of Bangladesh President Manzurul Ahsan Khan told The Daily Star that they have decided to build a united movement under the banner of the 11-party. "Simultaneous programmes are likely to be declared with the main opposition after discussions."

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu said it is a development in the opposition movement that the 11-party alliance has agreed to launch simultaneous movement to oust the four-party coalition government and realise its other demands.