

Twin blasts kill 20 Iraqi cops

US claims capture of senior Zargawi aide; 9 insurgents, 2 truckers killed

AP, AFP, Baghdad

Insurgents in Iraq targeted the country's US-backed security forces in two suicide car bombings yesterday that killed 20 police and national guardsmen, while a roadside bomb in Baghdad injured six US soldiers.

In the first suicide bombing a car bomber set off an explosion yesterday at a police station near a US Marine base in western Iraq, killing at least 16 policemen and wounding 40 other people, officials said.

The explosion occurred at about 7:00am outside the gates of Marine Camp Al Asad in Baghdadi, about 200km west of Baghdad near Ramadi, US and Iraqi officials said.

No American soldiers were hurt in the attack, the US military said. Some of the wounded were being treated at a US military medical facility, while others were flown to civilian hospitals, a spokesman said.

The blast came hours after the US military arrested an aide to Jordanian terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and five others during raids on a safe house in the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah,

officials said. The aide had risen to prominence in recent weeks as other al-Zarqawi staff had been killed, according to intelligence sources.

The 1:30 am raid in southern Fallujah targeted a site being used as a safe haven by al-Zarqawi's inner circle, according to a military statement.

Fallujah residents said the raid occurred at the home of Abdel-Hamid Fiyadh, 50, who was arrested along with his two sons, Walid, 18, and Majid, 25, and three relatives. Relatives insisted the men had nothing to do with al-Zarqawi, who has a \$25 million bounty on his head from the United States.

American forces have stepped up operations in Fallujah in a bid to root out al-Zarqawi's terror group, Tawhid and Jihad, which is believed to operate from there. The group has been blamed in numerous suicide bombings including recent twin blasts inside Baghdad's Green Zone, which houses the US and Iraqi leadership and beheadings of foreign hostages.

In a further blow to their bid to

restore order, a second suicide bomber struck about half an hour later in a farming town north of Baghdad.

"A car bomb, driven by a suicide driver, exploded at 8:00am (0500 GMT) at an Iraqi national guard check point in Ishaki 20km south of Samarra -- killing four and wounding six, all of them guardsmen," said Hamid Ahmad from the police in neighbouring Balad.

Among the most shocking of the kidnappings was that of Margaret Hassan, an aid worker with joint British, Irish and Iraqi citizenship who has spent nearly half her life delivering food and medicine in Iraq. Hassan, who is married to an Iraqi, was seized Tuesday in western Baghdad as she rode to work in her car.

On Friday, Hassan appeared in a wrenching televised statement begging for her life and urging British Prime Minister Tony Blair to withdraw his country's troops from Iraq.

The gaunt, 59-year-old woman's statement puts new political

N borders tense over push-in bids

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Situation across the 1,200km long frontier areas under Dinajpur and Panchagarh districts has been tense for one week over incidents of 'push-in' and 'push-back' attempts between India's Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

Sources said the BDR foiled several BSF attempts of pushing some Bangla-speaking Indian citizens in Bangladesh through several points of the country's northwestern borders.

BDR personnel under Rangpur and Dinajpur sector have been kept alert as the BSF is still trying to push Indian citizens in Bangladesh.

BDR sources said that several hundred Indian citizens, mostly Bangla speaking Muslims, had been picked up from different areas in India and kept in Hathkola and

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PHOTO: STAR

Two armed policemen stand guard on the premises of Bashundhara City market in the capital yesterday. The government has deployed police in all big shopping centres in Dhaka as part of beefed up security during Ramadan.

Buriganga continues to devour Basila

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Buriganga still continues devouring new areas at Basila, despite the government initiative to stop erosion by dredging areas adjacent to the brick kilns and dumping sandbags.

The Buriganga washed away five more houses there in last two weeks raising the total number of lost houses to 40 since August 13.

The river erosion at Basila is evidently caused by three brick kilns constructed illegally on the island in the river. The kiln owners built solid dyke in the beginning of flood this year to divert the river current from both sides of their installations.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) employed a dredger after the Basila residents demonstrated in front of

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Judge paved way for acquittal of killers at HC

Accuse families of jail killing victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members of the four national leaders yesterday said the judge gave a flawed judgment in the Jail Killing Case in a plan to benefit the 'killers' in the High Court.

At a press conference yesterday at Awami League's Dhanmondi

office, families of the four national leaders who were assassinated in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975, also expressed surprise at the judge's observation that 'no conspiracy was proved in the trial'.

Mohammad Nasim, son of M Mansur Ali, read out a written

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Rab rescues trader, nabs 2 kidnappers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday rescued a cattle trader and picked up two abductors from Agargaon in the city.

The abductors kidnapped cattle traders Shahid and Babul from Agargaon Bazar at around 6:30am. They demanded a ransom for their release and released Shahid to bring the money.

As Shahid went to the Rab office in Mohammadpur and sought help, the elite force rushed to the spot, rescued Babul and nabbed the two.

OMS enters third day, but rice price stays high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The poor in the capital and elsewhere in the country continued to bear the brunt of price hike of rice as the government's Open Market Sale (OMS) programme entered its third day yesterday hardly impacting the rice market.

Reports received from different parts of the country said absence of

OMS centres in many areas, sale of meagre quantities of rice and corrupt practices like sale of OMS rice to traders at higher prices make it difficult to achieve the objectives of the drive. Many people are not even aware of the programme under which they are to get coarse rice at Tk 13 a kg.

Although the government said it

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Powerful quake jolts Japan

4 killed, 300 hurt; high-speed train derails

AFP, Tokyo

A strong earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale and a series of aftershocks hit Japan's capital Tokyo and its surrounding areas yesterday, killing at least four people, officials and press reports said.

More than 300 people were injured and several houses destroyed, while a high-speed bullet train was derailed near the epicenter, some 200km north of Tokyo, according to hospital officials and press reports.

Four people were unaccounted for near the epicenter of the quakes, in the Niigata prefecture, as several houses were hit by landslides, a local police spokesman said.

Transport officials were on their way to two tunnels reported to have collapsed on the highway linking Tokyo and the city of Niigata, a major port by the Sea of Japan (East Sea).

The first quake struck at 5:56 pm (0856 GMT), rocking buildings in Tokyo for several minutes.

A series of aftershocks followed, including four tremors within two hours recording 6.3, 6.2, 5.9 and 5.9 on the Richter scale.

"We expect aftershocks to continue actively," Meteorological Agency official Masahiro Yamamoto said.

The focus of the first quake was located some 20km underground, a relatively shallow depth given the large amount of damage, officials said.

"I felt a strong vertical jolt first and then tremors continued for a while," said Kyoichi Sato, an official at the anti-disaster office in Nagaoka, another major city in Niigata prefecture.

"Things fell from the shelves and people appeared surprised, but there was no panic in the city."

Dozens of people were treated for injuries at the main hospital in Nagaoka where some 2,400 residents were evacuated to shelters after power and water supplies were cut off.

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Low gas supply cripples LPG production

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Production of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Limited (RPGCL) has gone down by 25 per cent due to fall in the supply of natural gas liquid (NGL) from Kailashtila gas fields under Sylhet Gas Fields Company Limited for months.

The fall in production has caused a short supply of LPG to the three state-run companies -- Padma, Meghna and Jamuna -- under Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) entrusted with the distribution of LPG through dealers and agents.

Besides, some private companies that market LPG in some northern districts are also getting low supplies.

Taking advantage of the situation, traders have raised the price of LPG in local markets to Tk 420-450

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Sehri-Iftar			
Ramadan	Oct	Sehri	Iftar
9	24		5-28
10	25	4-40	5-28

Prayer Timing		
October 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-40	4-46
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-28	5-33
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		