

Twin suicide blasts kill 27 in Iraq

39 others die in attack on police posts; GI bombed

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Suicide bombers killed at least 27 people in attacks in two Iraqi cities yesterday in the worst bloodshed since the country's historic election eight days ago while 36 other killed when insurgents attacked a police post in Mahawil late Sunday.

At least 15 people were killed and 13 wounded when a suicide car bomb exploded outside the main police headquarters in the town of Baquba, northeast of Baghdad.

Another 12 died and four were wounded when a suicide bomber targeted a crowd of police officers in a hospital compound in the northern city of Mosul.

A large crater was blown in the road and at least five cars were destroyed. Most, if not all, of the victims were thought to be police officers waiting to collect their salaries.

Earlier insurgents in pickup trucks attacked a police station

south of Baghdad late Sunday, prompting an hour-long gunfight that killed 22 Iraqi security forces and 14 attackers, a police official said.

The clash broke out about 10:30pm in Mahawil, 80km south of Baghdad, police Capt. Muthana Khalid Ali told The Associated Press by telephone.

Ali said five Iraqi national guardsmen and 17 police were killed and 18 security personnel were wounded. He said the attackers used automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades before withdrawing under fire.

Mahawil is in a mixed area of Shia and Sunni Muslims.

A US soldier was killed and two others wounded Sunday in a roadside bomb attack north of Baghdad, the US military said Monday in a statement.

"One Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed and two others injured by an improvised explosive

device north of the Iraqi capital," the statement said.

"The two wounded soldiers were evacuated to a military medical treatment facility," it said.

al-Qaeda's wing in Iraq claimed responsibility for the Mosul attack in a statement posted on a militant Web site.

"A lion in the martyrs' brigades of al-Qaeda Organisation for Holy War in Iraq attacked a gathering of apostates seeking to return to the apostate police force in Mosul near the hospital," the group said.

"The martyr was wearing an explosives belt and blew himself up after he entered the crowd," it added, vowing to carry out more attacks on "apostates and their masters."

Guerrillas trying to overthrow Iraq's US-backed government have

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The New Government Girls' High School at Armanitola in the capital is now illegally occupied by local influential people and the school compound is being used as godown as a case is pending with court over the ownership of the building.

Kibria's son slates speaker's statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Reza Kibria, son of the slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, yesterday condemned a statement made by Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar on his father's attack and death, saying it reflects the Speaker's sheer 'ineptitude', 'incompetence' and perhaps something much more 'sinister'.

The Speaker on Sunday told reporters that he learned about the attack and death of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria from the newspapers on the day following the incident.

Dr Reza Kibria, speaking yesterday at a conference at his father's Dhanmondi residence, said various people, including the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, tried to contact the Speaker but could not reach him by telephone.

"The inability of people to contact him in the critical hours following the attack (a period of about four hours) is something that needs to be thoroughly investigated when the FBI commences its inquiries," Dr Reza said, adding that all the

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Seven held for Sherpur cop killing during hartal

UNB, Sherpur

Seven people were yesterday arrested in connection with the killing of a constable and injuring three others during the hartal at Nalitabari on Sunday.

Police arrested Jubo League leader Wahidur Rahman, Akhteruzzaman Nanno, Yusuf, Abdul Halim, Abdus Sattar, Sujun and Mukhlis.

The constable, Ashraf Siddique, 40, succumbed to his injuries on way to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital. Injured ASIs Nurul Islam, Mizanur Rahman and constable Mujibur Rahman are undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Two cases were filed against 20 Awami League (AL) leaders and

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BAF aircraft veers off runway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A training aircraft of Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) skidded off the runway at Zahirul Haq airbase here in the port city yesterday.

Sources and witnesses said the FT-6 Supersonic model aircraft veered about 300 feet off the runway during a taxi-test at around 1:45 p.m.

However, no casualty was reported, the sources said, adding that the pilots were automatically ejected from the aircraft.

When asked, BAF authorities refused to give any information about the accident and suggested consulting the ISPR.



The 13th Saarc Summit was postponed six days ago, but the illuminations on the road dividers in the capital are still on, wasting huge electricity in the peak hours. The picture was taken yesterday from near Farm Gate.

PHOTO: STAR

GAS PIPELINE India picks officials for meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India has nominated four officials to represent the country in the forthcoming 'Technical Committee' meeting of the proposed tri-nation gas pipeline that also involves Bangladesh and Myanmar.

A press release issued by Indian High Commission yesterday named the Indian representatives for the meeting scheduled to be held in the second week of February in Yangon.

They are AK Srivastava, joint secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Swami Singh, director, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Rajeev Khanna, executive director (Business Development), Gas Authority of India Ltd., and a senior representative of ONGC Videsh Ltd. (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation).

The names were duly conveyed to the Government of Myanmar on

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Cop firing kills 1 AL man during clash with BNP workers

UNB, Kishoreganj

An Awami League (AL) activist died and ten others were wounded with bullets when police opened fire to disperse the feuding AL and BNP activists at Gujadia Bazaar in Karimganj upazila of the district yesterday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Abdul Hakim, 40, of Namapara village in the upazila.

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Nepal offers no-string talks to Maoists

REUTERS, AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's newly-appointed royalist government will soon appoint negotiators who will hold unconditional peace talks with Maoist rebels, local media reported yesterday.

It is the first step towards a peaceful end to a bloody Maoist revolt since King Gyanendra seized power a week ago, but is also being twinned with an increased army offensive and an appeal for the guerrillas to give up their weapons.

"(The government) is going to form a dialogue committee that will hold a dialogue with the Maoists soon," Culture and Aviation Minister Buddhiraj Bajracharya said, according to The Kathmandu Post.

"Now they should come for dialogue without any condition."

Bajracharya, one of the most senior members of Gyanendra's new 10-member cabinet, also said the king did not plan to ban political parties, despite arresting party leaders when he sacked the government last week.

The ousted government's failure to make any progress in ending the nine-year Maoist rebellion that has killed more than 11,000 people was one of the reasons Gyanendra gave for his abrupt move.

Earlier two senior Nepalese politicians, who fled to India on Sunday, asked Maoist insurgents yesterday not to hold talks with King Gyanendra and urged New Delhi to help reinstall the ousted government in Kathmandu.

The appeals came from two leaders of a group of six who took refuge in the northern Indian state of Uttaranchal Pradesh after fleeing across the border from Nepal at the weekend.

"We today appeal to the Maoists not to hold talks with the king... they should seek a democratic solution to their demands," said Dilendra Bood, a senior figure and former education minister in Nepal.

The royalist government headed by the king Monday offered to hold unconditional talks with the rebels to end the insurgency that has claimed more than 11,000 lives since 1996.

Before King Gyanendra seized power on February 1, the rebels said they would negotiate only with

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BTRC to pay Tk 48 lakh for services it never got

ABU SAEED KHAN

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is paying Tk 48 lakh for the services it has never received from a donor-funded state-owned consulting company.

The outgoing BTRC commis-

sioners, in their very last official meeting on January 26, hastily approved this controversial hefty payment.

In April 2002, the BTRC bypassed all competitive process and engaged

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Saber accuses govt of 'political terrorism'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina, yesterday accused the government of carrying out acts of 'political terrorism' and rehabilitating the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"Their (BNP) role, stand, attitude, and sympathy for the killers in the post '75 years show that they can't help getting involved in the killing," Saber said during a news briefing at Sudha Sadan, Dhanmondi in the city.

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Prayer Timing		
February 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Project proposal deadline Feb 28 for ADP inclusion

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government will drop from the current Annual Development Programme (ADP) the projects against which the ministries concerned will fail to send project proposals by February 28, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman has said.

The government, now in the process of revising the Tk 22,000 crore ADP, has also decided to drop those projects which could not utilise any funds although available for them, said a top official of the planning ministry.

The fate of these projects will be decided within this month following discussion with the implementing authorities to find out why they could not utilise the available funds.

There are 869 ADP projects and 330 earlier unapproved new projects for the current fiscal year. Of these, 290 are supposed to be

completed this year.

The finance minister had last year put much emphasis on efficient and proper implementation of the ADP. But in a review last week, the minister was disappointed with only 29 percent implementation and criticised different implementing authorities.

For instance, the civil aviation ministry failed to utilise a single taka against its project allocations in the last six months. The food and disaster management ministry utilised only six percent, water resources ministry seven percent, land ministry 10 percent, health ministry 13 percent, women and children affairs ministry 15 percent, environment ministry 18 percent, fisheries ministry 23 percent, industries ministry 27 percent and communications ministry 28 percent.

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