

Anti-Shia attacks kill 23 in Baghdad

3 GIs killed in action, 2 Indonesian journalists missing

AFP, Baghdad

At least 23 people were killed and more than 40 wounded in three attacks against Shias in Baghdad yesterday while three US soldiers were killed in action in northern region as Iraq's majority community began a religious mourning period that last year saw the bloodiest attacks since the war.

The blasts, which wounded at least 42 others, occurred within two hours of each other as worshippers marked the first of two days of mourning in the Shia ceremony of Ashura, bringing back grim memories of the bloodbath that marred last year's commemoration.

The deadliest blast occurred at a Shia mosque in southern Baghdad,

killing 17 people, police and medics said.

"The attack was carried out by a suicide bomber wearing an explosives belt at the Kazimain mosque in Abu Disha near Dura," a police officer said.

"I had just begun Friday prayers when an enormous explosion rocked the building," said the Dura mosque's imam, Sheikh Malek Kinani, who was also at the hospital.

Three other Iraqis, including a child, were killed and five wounded, when a mortar shell rippled through a cafe in the Baghdad neighbourhood of Shula, medical sources said.

Half an hour earlier, twin suicide bombers killed at least three people

at another Shia mosque in western Baghdad, a source at Yarmuk hospital said.

Shias were marking Tasua, the first of two days of mourning for the revered Imam Hussein which will culminate on Saturday with the religious festival of Ashura.

Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammed and the third Imam in Shia Islam, was killed in 680 AD during the battle of Karbala.

During Ashura ceremonies last year, bombings in the holy Shia city of Karbala and in Baghdad killed more than 170 people, attacks which remain the deadliest since Saddam Hussein was toppled by US-led forces in April 2003.

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Free water bodies from grabbers

Human chain demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-cultural organisations and environmentalists yesterday formed a human chain at Shahbagh in the city demanding recovery of some 43 illegally encroached and filled up canals in the capital.

At the human chain programme organised by Paribesh Bachao Andolon, an environmental organisation, speakers urged that the government enact a stringent law immediately to reoccupy these canals.

They also urged the government to take possession of 6,000 acres of illegally occupied low land of the city and its adjacent areas immediately.

"Some unscrupulous people and organisations have illegally occupied the city's 43 canals measuring 215 kilometres in length due to the government's indifference as well as patronisation, causing serious sufferings to common people," Abu Naser Khan, convenor of Paribesh Bachao Andolon, said.

Referring to water logging problem, land subsidence and depletion of ground water level, he said all these problems have emerged due to lack of surface water sources like canals.

Even the city's parks and playgrounds cannot be saved from the grabbers who have already occupied 27 out of 47 parks under the City Corporation, he added.

Five peripheral rivers of the city have also become somewhat dead due to unabated pollution, rendering the city more vulnerable to the City Corporation, he added.

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Govt still sitting on education commission report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is yet to start implementation of the National Education Commission-2003 report and is still 'prioritising the recommendations' of the report submitted 11 months ago.

Implementation of the recommendations will require several months more as the government is now prioritising them, a senior official of the education ministry said.

The commission, formed in January 2003 with former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Maniruzzaman Miah as its chairman, submitted its report in March last year.

Reports of previous education commissions or expert committees were not implemented fully.

"We have organised consulta-

BOMB AND GRENADE ATTACKS

Dr Kamal demands a 'truly independent' probe commission

UNB, Dhaka

obligation to produce all the evidence that is required," he said.

Besides, the commission should get the support and services of experts from home and abroad, as may be considered by the commission.

Dr Kamal said, "Failure of the government to constitute such a commission and give full support and cooperation to it will prove beyond doubt that it is obstructing investigation and the process of justice."

"The current situation is causing grave concern to all sections of our nation," he added.

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PHOTO: STAR

Jubilant participants in the Third Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad 2005 in the playground of Saint Joseph High School and College in the capital yesterday.

THIRD MATHEMATICAL OLYMPIAD OPENS

Books, pens & papers are their arms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at the 19th Jatiya Kabita Utshab (national poetry festival) on the Dhaka University (DU) Central Library premises yesterday urged to resist communal forces through poems and writings.

The two-day festival started at 10:00am with a colourful procession, followed by placing wreaths at the graves of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, artists Zainul Abedin and Qamrul Hasan, and the Central Shaheed Minar.

Poet Shamsur Rahman inaugurated the festival where Kabita

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and novelist, while speaking at the inaugural session.

Iqbal, also the vice president of Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee (BMOC), called on the participants to learn the history of Liberation War and cherish the hope to re-build the nation with the spirit of 1971.

BMOC organised the competition in association with Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited and Bengali national daily Prothom Alo.

Olympiad Committee President

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SUSPECTED LINKS TO EXTREMISTS

A number of cops of SW region under watch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A number of senior police officials including three superintendents of police (SP) in southwestern region are under watch for suspected close links to extremists.

The suspects include some police officials of the rank and status of additional SP and ASP, two assistant commissioners of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) and six officers-in-charge of police stations.

Former additional SP Mofazzel Hossain, now in Dhaka Central Jail, had made these disclosures when quizzed by Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC), sources said yesterday.

Mofazzel named some financial beneficiaries of extremists in the police department in Khulna Division.

Fear of losing job and leakage of their secret links with extremists is now haunting a number of police officials in the region,

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More about RU Islamist teacher's past

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

More 'misdeeds' of Rajshahi University teacher Dr Asadullah Al Galib and the extent of his political clout are coming to light after arrested Islamist revolutionaries in their statements last week had alleged his links with Islamist militant outfits.

For instance, after Asadullah had been expelled from Tawhid Trust in 2002, a gang of his followers besieged the office of the registrar of Joint Stock Company (JSC) in Dhaka to obtain by force a document certifying him as ameer of the trust.

The aggressive move was reportedly aimed at retaining Asadullah's control over some foreign-funded projects of the trust, a front organi

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Environmentalists form a human chain at Shahbagh yesterday demanding recovery of encroached water bodies in and around Dhaka.

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tions at all the six divisional headquarters with experts and stakeholders to prioritise the recommendations as the commission report contains hundreds of suggestions," said Asadur Rahman, chief of the implementation cell formed on the advice of the commission.

Some of the recommendations are however in the process of implementation, he told The Daily Star.

The education ministry has already taken steps to form a teacher recruitment body for appointment of dedicated and meritorious teachers. The commission suggested formation of such a body.

The process of formation of an accreditation council for private universities as well as decentralisation of education administration is on in the light of the commission report, Asadur mentioned.

The cell will also assess financial requirements for the implementation of the commission report, he added.

The commission suggested a 'unitrack' secondary education system instead of science, humanities and commerce sections at secondary and higher secondary levels as at present.

It also recommended a new

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Source: Islamic Foundation

Prayer Timing

February 19

Azan Jamaat

Fajr 5-20 5-55

Zohr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-30 4-45

Maghrib 6-03 6-07

Esha 7-30 8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation