

20 killed in bomb blast at Pak Shia shrine

AP, Islamabad

A suicide bomber set off explosives yesterday in a Shia shrine, killing at least 20 and wounding dozens gathered for a religious festival near the capital.

The motive was not immediately clear, but there are frequent sectarian attacks in Pakistan by extremist elements of the Sunni and minority Shia sects.

An AP photographer at the scene counted at least 20 bodies, many in pieces. An intelligence official said at least 20 people were killed and 150 were wounded.

The bomb ripped through hun-

dreds of worshippers as they were reciting the Quran beneath tents at the Bari Imam shrine in Nurpur outside Islamabad.

"It was like hell," said Syed Muktar Hussain Shah, 40, who had been waiting for a prominent Shia leader, Hamid Moasvi, to address the gathering when the bomb went off. "I fell down ... when I woke up I saw dead bodies around me."

"None of the bodies was intact," said Dr. Wahid Abbas, who helped treat the wounded. "Some had legs blown off, some had their hands blown off."

He and other witnesses said police collected the head of a sus-

pected suicide bomber. Authorities did not immediately confirm that information.

The Shia leader, Moasvi, was not hurt, witnesses said.

Mukhtar Kazmi, who was running a free clinic at the shrine, said it had treated about 200 people.

Police cordoned off the shrine and blocked access roads after the blast. The shrine is about half a mile from the official residence of Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz.

Shia worshippers, weeping and moaning, beat their chests in grief. Some clashed with police after

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Iraq insurgents down US chopper: 2 GIs killed

AFP, Baghdad

Two US soldiers were killed when insurgents shot down their helicopter, the military said yesterday, as the Iraqi government sealed off Baghdad in a bid to quell mounting attacks on the capital.

Meanwhile, speculation continued over the fate of al-Qaeda's ringleader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, reported to have been badly wounded and the focus of a spate of conflicting Internet claims.

The dead US soldiers were flying in one of two helicopters attacked by insurgent gunfire, which crashed as they were carrying out a support mission for coalition troops near the rebel stronghold of Baquba late Thursday.

The second chopper managed to land at a US air base after sustaining damage, it said, with US forces securing the area around the crash site.

With car bombs exploding almost daily in the capital, the government has started a vast operation to seal off Baghdad using tens of thousands of Iraqi police and soldiers and setting up hundreds of extra checkpoints.

"We're going to set up a security cordon around Baghdad ... and it will be impossible for terrorists to cross," said Defence Minister Saadun al-

Dulaimi, adding that the plan would soon be extended to the provinces.

"The objective is to pass from a defensive position to an offensive one and to put the capacities of defence and interior ministry forces to the best use."

In the northwest, around 1,000 US and Iraqi troops continued their operation in the Euphrates Valley town of Haditha in a bid to rout insurgents loyal to Zarqawi who fled an earlier operation near the Syrian border.

Zarqawi was reported wounded last week with a bullet wound between his shoulder and his chest, according to unverifiable statements on Internet websites, though

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
May 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-43	6-47
Esha	8-05	8-35
Source: Islamic Foundation		



2 killed in 'shootout' with police, Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged robber was killed in an 'encounter' with police in Uttara in the capital and an outlaw died in 'crossfire' between his associates and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Rajshahi yesterday.

Uttara police said a patrol team and locals chased Anisur Rahman Anis, 32, after he along with three others committed robbery at Jasim

Uddin's house in Madhya Fayadabad at around 3:30am.

"As the fleeing robbers hurled three hand bombs at their chasers, Sub-inspector (SI) Sajjad, head of the team, fired five shots at them," said the duty officer of Uttara Police Station.

He said the locals caught and beat up Anis who was hit by two bullets. He died at around 4:30am.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Flood situation in Moulvibazar improving

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Flood situation in Moulvibazar district has slightly improved, as all the rivers of the district are flowing below the danger level.

Some low-lying areas in the district have been inundated due to rise of water level of Hakaluki haor.

The flash flood hit the district on Tuesday due to heavy rain and onrush of waters from across the border, inundating 33 unions of Kamalganj, Rajnagar, Kulaura and Borolekha upazilas and marooning about 2.50 lakh people.

Flood waters are still entering the villages of the affected upazilas through the breaches of the Manu river flood protection embankment

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Ctg city BNP meets today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A workers' meeting of Chittagong City BNP will be held at the party office at Nasiman Bhaban this afternoon.

The meeting, the first after the dissolution of the city committee, will chalk out elaborate programmes to observe the death anniversary of BNP's founding chairman and late president Ziaur Rahman.

Convenor of the newly formed convening committee Syed Wahidul Alam MP and member of the committee Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman will attend the meeting to be held at 5:00pm.

Sources said the meeting will also discuss some important issues relating to the formation of a full-fledged committee of Chittagong City BNP and strengthening the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Ex-AL lawmaker Shamsul Huq passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former lawmaker, language movement veteran and Liberation War organiser Shamsul Huq passed away yesterday at city's Birdem hospital. He was 75.

Shamsul Huq, a senior Awami League (AL) leader from Mymensingh, was suffering from kidney and cardiac problems for a long time and undergoing treatment at Birdem hospital.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Putting cart before horse

Costly cancer treatment machine bought without proper infrastructure, safety measures

NAIMUL HAQ

The health ministry has purchased a linear accelerator (Linac), a highly sophisticated cancer treatment machine at a cost of over Tk 9.5 crore without arrangement for proper infrastructure and safety measures.

Without having proper preservation facilities, a Linac machine can sustain damage to its software, ionization chamber, filter and other sensitive devices, oncologists and technicians said.

The US-manufactured Linac that uses external beam radiation to destroy malignant or cancerous tissues was ordered for delivery to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) in 2004 and is scheduled to reach Bangladesh in the second half of June.

But there was not any funds, plans or designs to accommodate the machine that requires specially constructed building to protect operators and surrounding people from radiation, sources said.

As the high-tech machine (model Clinac 2100C) manufactured by US Company Varian has capacity to produce high-power radioactive beams, the building must have three to five feet thick walls with thick metal plate inside as per recommendations of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission

(BAEC).

It is also recommended that if the infrastructure is not ready before installation of the machine, it should be preserved in a specially designed room with facilities for 24 hours cooling, dehumidifier and insect and germ repellents.

Despite knowing all the facts, the health ministry virtually took no initiative to have the facilities ready on time. Until May 24 fund for the construction of the estimated Tk 3.3 crore building was not officially allocated and Nurani Constructions, the firm commissioned to construct the building, did

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



RELIEF FROM HEAT: A boy jumps into the river Buriganga to have a relishing bath during hot weather yesterday.

Hot spell to continue a few more days

3 die in Pabna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing severe heatwave claimed three lives in Pabna while several hundred fell sick in different parts of the country.

In the capital, intolerably hot and humid weather disrupts the public life, limiting people's movement especially at noon.

The heatwave over the country

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Road crashes kill 11 in 5 districts

STAR NEWS DESK

Eleven people died and 90 others were injured in road accidents in Dhaka, Rangpur, Chittagong, Tangail and Barisal yesterday.

In Rangpur, the accident happened when a Thakurgaon bound night coach skidded off the Dhaka-Rangpur highway and fell into a ditch near Abra Bridge in Peerganj upazila early yesterday, killing three on the spot and injuring 26 others.

Of the injured, one died on the way to hospital, while others were rushed to Peerganj Hospital and Rangpur Medical College and Hospital.

One of the dead was identified as Nazrul Islam, 29. Identity of the remaining three could not be known.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Bush praises Dhaka's achievements

BSS, Washington

US President George Bush appreciated "Bangladesh's achievements in terms of economic growth over the past several years" and "its contribution of troops to United Nations Peacekeeping operations throughout the world."

While accepting the Letter of Credence from newly appointed Bangladesh Ambassador Shamsheer Chowdhury at the Oval Office yesterday, President Bush said, "I hope the excellent relationship between our two great democratic nations will mature and grow in the months and years ahead."

Terming Bangladesh "a vibrant democracy", President Bush said, "A stable and democratic Bangladesh is in the interests of the United States, and the South Asian region."

President Bush also pledged to support the Bangladesh government in its efforts to strengthen and improve democratic institutions, maintain law and order and protect the rights of minorities.

"The United States will assist your nation in these endeavours, but the future of Bangladesh belongs to the Bangladeshi people," he said.

Ambassador Chowdhury conveyed to President Bush greetings of President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Ahab blames Jamaat for Galib's arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Ahle Hadith Andolan, Bangladesh (Ahab) yesterday said Jamaat-e-Islami paved ways for the arrest of its chief Asadullah Galib to cover up the party's links with militant outfits.

Ahab leaders at an informal press meet also said they had close links with Jamaat before the arrest of Galib and three other top brass.

They termed baseless and fabricated the statements of militants on which the arrest was made.

The Ahab arranged the meet at a short verbal notice at its ameer's office in Naodapara in the city.

It also announced a rally in Shaheb Bazar in the city on June 3 to demand immediate release of Galib and other leaders.

Galib, also an Arabic professor at Rajshahi University, his second-in command Shaikh Abdus Samad Salafi, Ahab General Secretary Nurul Islam and Organising Secretary ASM Azizullah were arrested on February 23.

"Fearing the increasing support for Ahab, Jamaat supported the arrest to gain organisational advan

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3