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## London blasts kill over 50

Police hunt for clues, struggle to retrieve trapped bodies: NYT says timing devices set off blasts

REUTERS, London

Police scrambled through dangerous rail tunnels deep underground yesterday to hunt for clues and retrieve bodies after suspected al-Qaeda bombers killed more than 50 people in London rush-hour blasts.

A day after four bombs tore through three underground trains

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and a red double-decker bus, commuters headed to work again on London's battered transport network, some fearful, some defiant, spurred on by the knowledge it might happen again.

"My granddad called me last night and told me I had to go to work today," said Sally Higson, 36. "He's 89. He lived through the war and said it was important to carry on as normal."

The attacks—which ministers said bore the hallmarks of the Islamic militant al-Qaeda network—were London's deadliest in peacetime and disrupted a summit of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialised countries in Gleneagles, Scotland.

London police Chief Ian Blair said more than 50 people were killed

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PHOTO: AFP

London Metropolitan Police evacuate people from Liverpool Street yesterday after detecting a suspicious-looking package. The station was one of the targets of Thursday's grisly bomb attacks.

## 'Islam prohibits killing of any innocent people'

AGENCIES

The secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) expressed his condolences yesterday for the bombings in London that killed at least 50 people and injured hundreds.

Ekmeladdin Ihsanoglu sent a message from Saudi Arabia to Prime Minister Tony Blair expressing his "utmost indignation and outrage" and condemning, "in the strongest terms, these horrendous acts," an OIC statement said.

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## 'Bangladeshis in UK safe'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

None of the Bangladeshis living in the United Kingdom (UK) were injured or hurt in Thursday's bomb blasts in London, Bangladesh High

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## London Muslims condemn attacks, fear backlash

AFP, London

The bombs that ripped through London posed a double threat for the city's large Muslim population: Not only did two of them hit heavily Muslim areas but the community now fears a backlash.

"It is very, very bad. Both what has happened and what could happen to us," said Zahid Rahman, a Muslim further education college worker of Bangladeshi origin.

Gathered in a small huddle of friends, Rahman was speaking on the fringes of Brick Lane, a famous strip of Bengali restaurants just east of central London.

"It's a worrying time to be a Muslim," agreed Kaimul Haque, a travel agency employee standing with him.

The local population is predomi-

nantly Muslim, to the extent that the local lawmaker from Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour Party was removed from office at May's general election by a left-wing candidate standing on a specific anti-Iraq war platform.

The first of four bomb blasts, which killed more than 50 people and injured hundreds more in London on Thursday, exploded in a London underground rail tunnel near Aldgate station, on the edge of the Muslim area.

Hundreds of injured people were taken by ambulance—or in the case of the critically injured, helicopter—to the Royal London Hospital, deep in the Bengali area and only a few hundred metres from the imposing East London Mosque.

Another train blast hit Edgware

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## Touching scenes at hospitals

AFP, London

Hundreds of victims of the London bombings, some with burns and high-velocity puncture wounds, packed the capital's hospitals on Thursday, stretching facilities to the limit.

Major hospitals went on alert within minutes of the first explosions in the morning rush hour.

Paramedics battled to save the most critically injured on the streets or platforms of underground rail stations. Doctors at the British Medical Association raced out to the street to treat casualties when a bus exploded outside their offices.

Dozens of people flooded into the University College Hospital in central London, near the scene of the underground blast between Russell Square and King's Cross.

"People have been penetrated by fragments of bomb blast debris," said Jim Ryan, head of the hospital's major incident team.

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## Khaleda's trip to boost ties, says Tokyo

UNB, Tokyo

Japan will strengthen economic and political ties with Bangladesh and will also seek Dhaka's support to the draft proposal for expansion of the UN Security Council during Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan from Tuesday.

"The Japanese side is looking forward to welcoming the guest in Tokyo as her visit is considered to be very important," a spokesman for Japanese Foreign Ministry told a press briefing yesterday.

Director General of Press and Publications Wing Hatsuhsa Takashima said Japan will seize the opportunity of the visit to promote further the friendly relations between the two countries.

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## Contractor shot dead, mugger lynched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown criminals gunned down a contractor at Malibagh, while a mob beat an alleged mugger to death at Mohammadpur in the capital yesterday.

Witnesses said the assailants swooped on Shah Ali, 25, a contractor and stone supplier, in front of Abuzar Gifari University College at about 11:30am.

They shot Ali in the stomach and head and left the scene immediately. Locals rushed him to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Local people said Ali, having criminal record, was arrested by police two months ago. Later, he was released.

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## Dipu's body may be exhumed today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Body of schoolboy Dipu Islam may be exhumed from Azampur graveyard today for an autopsy.

A student of class IV of Nayatola Government Primary School, Dipu Islam was beaten up by his teachers on Saturday and died at Ad-Deen Hospital in Moghbazar on Tuesday.

He was buried at the graveyard on Tuesday night without an autopsy.

Sub-Inspector Abdullahel Baki, investigation officer (IO) of the case, said the body was supposed to be

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## Opposition accord on key reform proposals

REAZ AHMAD

In pursuit of a common agenda for reforms in the electoral and caretaker government systems ahead of the next general elections, the Awami League (AL) and its allies have agreed on two reform proposals -- widening the criteria for choosing the head of caretaker government and putting the defence ministry under him, instead of keeping it under the president.

The AL, left-leaning 11-party alliance and JSD (Inu) have almost completed formulation of a common reform agenda based on at least three sets of draft agenda

prepared separately by them.

These reform proposals are considered crucial against the backdrop of the AL's hints at boycotting the next polls if the government does not implement the proposed reforms.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), a key component of the 11-party combine, however kept off the move for a common agenda, terming the AL a 'centre right' party not taking a tough stance on issues like US-led imperialism and denationalisation at home. The CPB chose to go ahead with a movement based on the 11-party's reform agenda, saying it

would strengthen the alliance as an 'alternative political force' beyond the AL-BNP bipolar politics.

To synchronise the reform agenda put forward by the AL, 11-party and JSD, and make a draft common agenda, a seven-member committee comprising representatives from all the three met last week and will sit again in the next two days.

Sources in the opposition told The Daily Star last night that their central leaders would then finalise the common agenda and make it public.

Initi seven-point reform proposal

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## DOMESTIC SUPPLY

## Reality mocks at cylinder gas plan

SHARIER KHAN

While Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman announced earlier last week that cylinder gas may replace pipeline gas supply for domestic users, Bangladesh neither has enough liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to meet the need nor has good reasons to justify abandoning the present system.

The finance minister claimed that nowhere in the world, except Bangladesh, piped gas is supplied for domestic consumption, and that domestic users waste huge quantity

of gas.

On July 6, Advisor to the energy ministry Mahmudur Rahman said 99 percent countries of the world do not use piped gas for domestic consumption.

But in most western countries where natural gas is locally available, as in the USA and Canada, domestic users consume significant quantity of piped gas for both cooking and heating.

Countries that do not have gas resources or have to depend on energy import, such as Thailand,

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## Encroachment of retention ponds worsens waterlogging

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The four official rainwater retention ponds in the city have been encroached upon and as a result, have become so narrow that the modern pump houses do not have enough draft to pump water out of the city protection dyke, increasingly aggravating waterlogging problems in the city.

The embankments surrounding the entire urban area and these four pumps were installed to rid the capital of rainwater during the

monsoon, when natural drainage does not take place due to higher water level in the rivers outside the embankments.

While the city reels under rainwater, these Japan-made pump houses at Kalyanpur, Goranchadbari, Millbarack and the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) areas are often switched off. All the four pumps are able to jet out around 67 cubic metres of water a second.

The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) and Water

Development Board (WDB) officials said although during the rainy season these pumps operate longer, the restrained areas of the retention points do not provide enough water due to two reasons. First, the designated retention ponds along the pump houses, where rainwater accumulates, have been indiscriminately encroached upon by the real estate developers. Second, the surface drains, storm sewerage and canals, through which the rainwater is supposed to flow up to the

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