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Roadside bomb kills 10 US marines in Iraq

AFP, Washington

A roadside bomb killed 10 US marines and wounded 11 outside of the troubled Iraqi city of Fallujah in one of the deadliest attacks in recent months, the US military said yesterday.

The marines were on a foot patrol outside of Fallujah, just west of Baghdad, when they were attacked on Thursday, said a US marines statement.

"The patrol was attacked with an IED (improvised explosive device) fashioned from several large artillery shells," said the statement.

It said seven of those injured in the incident had returned to duty.

The dead were from the 2nd Marine Division's Regimental

Combat Team 8, the statement said, adding that the names were withheld pending notification of next-of-kin.

Another US marine was killed in Fallujah on Wednesday.

The attack was the deadliest on US forces in Iraq since an August 3 blast killed 14 marines during combat operations near Haditha, 260 kilometers (160 miles) northwest of Baghdad.

More than 2,110 US service personnel have died in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion.

The latest attack was announced as about 500 US and Iraqi troops launched a new offensive against insurgents in Ramadi, also west of Baghdad.

The offensive came a day after residents of Ramadi, capital of Al-

Anbar province, reported a sudden insurgent presence on the streets, with dozens of fighters roaming unchecked and putting up Al-Qaeda posters.

Fallujah was known as an Al-Qaeda stronghold when in November 2004, it was stormed by thousands of US and Iraqi soldiers and pounded by US artillery, planes and tanks.

Another report says, despite US claims of progress in quelling the insurgency in Iraq, it remains as robust as ever with a potential for becoming a good deal stronger, according to a new study released Thursday.

The study by two veteran defense analysts working for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy also said the US operation in

Iraq was at a "tipping point" that will last for six to nine months.

"I think the outcome of this tipping period is probably going to dictate whether or not the US effort in Iraq succeeds or fails," analyst Jeffrey White said at a lunch unveiled the report.

The study said the insurgency, comprising of nationalists, members of Saddam Hussein's toppled regime and foreign Islamic fighters, showed no sign of losing steam 32 months after the US-led invasion.

"Although thousands of insurgents have been killed and tens of thousands of Iraqis have been detained ... incident and casualty data reinforce the impression that the insurgency is as robust and lethal as ever," it said.

Saifur ridicules notion of 'going to heaven by killing people'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Those who think of going to heaven by killing innocent people through bombing and terrorism are mindless, ignorant and fanatic, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said at the inaugural function of the Sylhet divisional public library yesterday.

Islam never allows such killings or attacks, the finance minister said, adding that some uneducated and half-educated people are being used for these activities.

The existing education system in the country does not help flourish merit in real sense and that is why subversive activities have risen, Saifur said.

There should be a concerted effort to stop such things, he added.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Dilder Hossain Selim MP, Abeda Chowdhury MP, Nur Afroz Begum MP and city BNP President Ariful Haque Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion chaired by the Director of National Library Directorate poet Abu Saleh.

Ctg bomber buried, none claims body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong suicide bomber was buried as "bewarish" (unclaimed) one here yesterday.

The bomber, Hossain Ali alias Abul Basher, succumbed to his injuries at Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) on Thursday.

Having none to claim it, police handed over the body to Anjuman Muftid Islam, a charitable organisation carrying out burial activities in the morning.

Anjuman Muftid Islam buried the body at the Station Road graveyard at noon, sources said.

Hossain Ali of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), carried out a ghastly blast on Chittagong Court Building premises Tuesday morning that left two persons, including

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Khatib obaidul condemns bomb attacks

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Maulana Obaidul Haque has said those who are killing people with bombs are in the wrong way to establish Islam.

"Islam can't be established in such way," he said while conducting a munajat after Juma prayers at the national mosque.

Maulana Haque condemned the deadly bomb attacks, saying that Islam is a religion of peace and it does not support violence.

The khatib prayed for the eternal peace of the victims of bomb attacks across the country including the two judges in Jhalakathi.

He also said Islam does not allow blaming someone on imaginary grounds.

Without naming any quarter, he said the trend of blaming others is beyond Islamic teaching and said Allah will bless them with the ability to find out the truth.

3 UPDF men shot dead

BDNEWS, Khagrachhari

Three activists of the United Peoples' Democratic Front (UPDF) were shot dead in a remote forest of Rangamati upazila under Khagrachhari district yesterday evening.

The anti-peace accord group blamed the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) cadres for the killing.

The identities of the dead could not be known immediately.

Prayer Timing

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity brings out a procession in Rangamati yesterday marking the eighth anniversary of signing the CHT peace accord and demanding its full implementation. Story on page 6

Lax security helped militants gather strength in CHT

Discussion on peace accord told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islamist militant forces have gathered strength in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) with the security forces taking no steps to tackle them, leaders of the indigenous people, opposition political parties and human rights bodies said at a discussion in the capital yesterday.

In the absence of implementation of the CHT peace accord, Islamist militants of Myanmar are also helping the Bangladeshi militants by giving them arms and training, which has now posed a threat to national security, Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) leaders said.

Various communal organisations are mobilising Bangalees in the CHT against indigenous people and for opposing the peace accord. Moreover, the United Peoples' Democratic Front created by a vested quarter in the government is engaged in activities against the indigenous people in the three hill districts and conspiring for cancellation of the peace accord, the PCJSS alleged.

Parbatya Chattagram Samadhi Andolok (Movement for equal rights in the CHT), under the shelter of security forces, is carrying out communal activities against the indigenous people in the three hill districts and conspiring for cancellation of the peace accord, the PCJSS alleged.

PCJSS Vice President Rupayan Dewan alleged 'repression' on indigenous people by security forces. They are also creating

obstacles to implementation of the peace pact. He regretted rehabilitating thousands of Bangalee settlers and leasing out land to them in the three hill districts.

He demanded immediate implementation of the peace accord.

PCJSS President Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma, who chaired the discussion, stressed political will for resolving CHT problems since, he said, it is a national issue and not an issue of indigenous people only.

Larma, also chairman of the CHT Regional Council, asserted said, "I have a firm belief that the peace accord will be implemented."

Deputy Minister of CHT Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan admitted his failure to ensure non-implementation of the accord but declined to explain it.

The CHT issue should be considered a national problem that has

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Security beefed up at DMCH

DMCH CORRESPONDENT

As Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) is crowded with the attendants of patients, largely victims of two recent suicide blasts in Gazipur, security measures have been beefed up there.

In addition to 15 police personnel there, 44 others, including 10 policewomen, were engaged from Thursday night at the four entrances of the DMCH.

Checking will be done round the clock, said the in-charge of DMCH police camp.

Even the relatives of the patients carrying foods and other essentials for the patients are now facing close checking and women in cloak and bearded men are being checked more carefully, said on duty policemen.

Ten policewomen were drafted in so that checking of women, especially the veiled ones, can be done easily, said Officer-in-Charge of Ramna Police Station Mahbubur Rahman, who is supervising the work of the security personnel at the DMCH.

Saptarshi put under care of paternal grandmother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal



Saptarshi, daughter of murdered Advocate Dilruba Huq Papiya, was handed over to her paternal grandmother yesterday following an order of the third additional court for family affairs in Dhaka.

Officials of the safe home, where the nine-year-old girl had been kept since the murder of her mother, gave Mamata Begum and her family the custody of Saptarshi after they applied to the Dhaka court on November 27.

Saptarshi's father Tuhin and his sister Swapna are the main accused in the murder case of human rights activist and NGO official Papiya while Saptarshi is

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PAUL VOLCKER'S REPORT ON IRAQI SCAM

New allegations rock Indian parliament

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Both the Houses of Parliament in India were on Friday adjourned after the opposition stalled their functioning over new allegations in the Iraq Oil-for-Food programme.

The Lok Sabha was twice adjourned over opposition demands for the resignation of Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Minister without Portfolio K Natwar Singh over an allegation by Aneil Mathrani, the Indian ambas-

sador to Croatia, that Singh wasn't clean as he claimed to be.

Mathrani told a TV news channel that Singh had exploited a Congress delegation's trip to Iraq for buying coupons for oil and making money.

Bharatiya Janata Party president and Leader of Opposition LK Advani said neither the prime minister nor the government had divulged this during a discussion in Parliament last week on the UN-appointed Paul Volcker's report on

the Iraqis scam.

Despite the issue being discussed in both the Houses of Parliament, the prime minister did not make a statement. This is outrageous. It is an insult to the House of the country," he said.

Advani also said Natwar Singh should step down from the government but he should not be a scapegoat. "The Congress party should also take responsibility," he maintained.

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Main accused of Balu murder killed in 'shootout' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The top leader of an outlawed outfit, who was accused of murdering journalist Humayun Kabir Balu, was killed in a 'shootout' between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices in Rupsha upazila of Khulna early yesterday.

The slain, Sharifuzzaman Sumon alias Sohel, 30, was the second in command and of Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Bangla Communist Party (PBPC). A member of Rab was also injured in the shootout during an arms recovery drive in Nalhati Kalibari area.

According to a Rab press release, one revolver, two large daggers, nine bullets and two used cartridges were recovered from the scene of the shooting that contin-

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Seaport security to be reviewed

RAFIQ HASAN

The department of shipping called an emergency meeting of the designated authority committee (DA Committee) under the international ship and port security (ISPS) code to review security at the two seaports in Chittagong and Mongla following suicide bomb attacks on court premises in Gazipur and Chittagong.

Director general of the department, Shafiqullah, will be back from his visit to the UK today and will preside over the meeting on Monday, sources said.

The high powered meeting will be attended by representatives from the navy, coast guard, police, intelligence agencies, customs department and the ministry of shipping. Usually the committee meets every two months but the emergency meeting was called following deterioration of law and order situation in the country.

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Participants at the dialogue said the new curriculum would rather degrade the existing education system. They suggested launching a system that will merge three mediums of education--English, Bangla and madrasa -- into one single unit to be based on the motherlanguage.

"Without changing madrasa and English medium education systems, the move to change the secondary education will lead to more discriminations among the

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'Proposed 'unified' education system to encourage militancy'

Concern at less stress on science subjects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Concerned over the 'unified education system' proposed to be introduced at the secondary level in the coming year, educationists yesterday said the system will encourage religious militancy by laying more stress on religious studies and less on science subjects.

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Speakers both at a dialogue organised by Centre for Studies in Social Transformation and a semi-

nar organised by Bangladesh Shikshak-Karmachary Oikya Parishad, urged all people concerned to unite in opposition to the proposed system for the sake of national existence as well as standards of education.

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