

## Baghdad violence

FROM PAGE 16

That has brought a risk that millions of ordinary but almost universally armed Iraqis may be dragged into all-out civil war.

US, Iraqi and international leaders have sounded alarms this week as new data showed tens of thousands of people have fled their homes in fear of death squads since a government of Shias, Sunnis and Kurds was formed in May and that some 6,000 civilians may have been killed in violence in two months.

The regular Friday ban on traffic in Baghdad from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. has been extended to 7 p.m. for the day, state media said. An overnight curfew operates daily from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Describing the capital as a "must-win" for both the rebels and the government, US military spokesman Major General William Caldwell conceded on Thursday that Maliki's month-old security clampdown in Baghdad had achieved only a "slight downturn" in violence, with civilian deaths steady.

"They will do an all-out assault against the Baghdad area," he said. "We have seen the movement of terrorist elements into the Baghdad area. We have seen the flow occurring."

US-led forces have also been cracking down on Shia warlords, many of them apparently rogue elements of pro-government militias that Maliki has promised to rein.

British forces in the Shia southern city of Basra said they arrested two men in separate operations early on Friday.

"We strongly suspect them of terrorist activities ... including executions, kidnappings, attacks on Coalition forces bases and patrols and attacks on Basra civilians," Major Charlie Burbidge, a British military spokesman, said.

He declined to say which group they belonged to but said they were "significant" figures, albeit less senior than a man seized on Sunday who fellow militants said was the commander of the Mehdhi Army, Shia Islamist militia in Basra.

British officers say elements of the Mehdhi Army, widely blamed by Sunnis and secular Shias for running death squads against them, are not under the control of its nominal leader, radical young cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose followers hold a number of important ministries in Maliki's government.

Maliki goes next week to Washington, where President George W Bush hopes for progress in Iraq that may help at November's congressional elections and make it easier to withdraw troops.

But Iraqi politicians and diplomats increasingly question the resolve within the government and parliament to set aside partisan aims to stop a bloody break-up of the oil-rich state.

In Baquba, US troops killed six Iraqi civilians yesterday during a raid against a suspected insurgent hideout, local police said, as security forces imposed an extended vehicle ban in strife-torn Baghdad. The US military said one suspected "terrorist" was killed in the operation and several people wounded, but an AFP photographer saw six bodies, including that of a child, in a nearby hospital.

Iraqi police said the raid took place near the city of Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, and that two women and a young girl were among six civilian casualties. Some 20 people were wounded, an officer said.

A US statement did not confirm this version of events, but said that wounded people had been treated on the spot and at coalition military bases.

"As the troops began to secure the area, they received small arms fire from the roof top of one of the initial target buildings," the US statement said, adding that soldiers had shouted warnings before calling in air support.

"Aerial fires were placed on the building and then halted. A third attempt to call the occupants out of the buildings then failed ... The troops secured the area using a combination of aerial and ground fire," it said.

While a US spokesman would not

confirm or deny the reported civilian death toll, the initial statement said: "We regret that civilians are hurt or killed while coalition forces search for Iraqis.

Mohammed Omar, a resident of the area, said that local guards had opened fire on the US soldiers thinking they were insurgents.

Another local resident, Ahmed Humam, said at least 20 people had been wounded and were "taken by the Americans".

The US military has repeatedly come under criticism for the killing of Iraqi civilians, the most notable case being November's alleged rampage by Marines in Haditha in the western Al-Anbar province in which 24 civilians were killed.

Diyalah province, especially the area around its provincial capital, Baquba, has been riven by sectarian fighting, with gunmen from both the Sunni and Shiite communities carrying out massacres of civilians.

Sectarian militia have also been carrying out increasing numbers of killings in the capital Baghdad, where authorities extended a vehicle ban to Friday's weekly prayers from four to eight hours.

A recent UN report on the situation in Iraq, which noted that 40 percent of the civilian casualties in the first six months of the year occurred in May and June, also mentioned the increased attacks on places of worship.

"Attacks against mosques of Sunnis and Shia denomination, as well as against religious authorities, have also reportedly resulted in diminished attendance," the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq's human rights report said.

The security operation has put 50,000 US and Iraqi troops on the streets, mostly visible as an increased series of checkpoints, but also in more numerous operations around the city.

### Voter list update

FROM PAGE 1

Door visits will begin on Sunday. Our correspondent from Bogra adds: Bogra District Election Office said voter listing forms have been distributed to assistant registration officers (ARO) at different upazilas.

The office sources said around 1,900 AROs have been appointed to collect voters' particulars by going from door to door.

The task did not begin in most of the areas of the district due to the teachers' strike, sources said.

Our Netrakona correspondent found that District Election Officer (DEO) Mohammad Salamatullah Mia absent at the office at 11:00am.

This correspondent also visited the different villages of Atpara, Barhatta and Purbadhalia upazila and found that no assistant officers on duty for updating voter list.

On the role of local media during Taher's prosecution, he said not a single item on the case or his deportation by the then government for attempting to report on the trial had appeared in the Bangladesh press throughout the month of the trial. Every editor and many journalists, however, knew precisely what was going on inside the walls of the central jail, he said.

Kamal Lohani, president of the Colonel Taher Sangsad, chaired the discussion programme. Dr Kamal Hossain, president of Gono Forum, Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers' Party of Bangladesh, Sharif Nurul Ambia, vice-president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Prof Anwar Hossain, younger brother of Col Taher, and Ruhul Kuddus Babu, general secretary of Taher Sangsad, also spoke at the meeting.

Many young's were waiting at different villages of visited three upazilas but no election officials went there for updating of voter list.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent adds: An assistant registration officer of Rajshahi said that he employed assistants numbering 12 who will go door to door and report him on the next day. However, he could not tell where actually his assistants were working.

Visiting city areas, none was found visiting houses for updating voter list.

Some ARO reported that they were yet to start the work, as they have not received orders and necessary forms.

Nilphamari Correspondent adds: On the first day of the updating task on Friday, no activity was visible in any upazila election office. All the six upazila election offices remained closed.

## 14-party to discuss

greater alliance during the caretaker government period, said a party insider.

The AL allies fear that if such grand alliance is formed, the number of seats for them will decrease.

The senior leaders will point out to Hasina these matters so that they can remove the existing disagreement and work out a strategy to ensure victory in the upcoming election.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu, however, said they have no dispute inside the alliance. "We are at the first stage of the proposed three-stage coalition-movement, election and forming government," he observed.

But some other leaders expressed different views. They said they want to go for an immediate agreement over seat sharing, "We want to settle the issue right now," a senior leader told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.

### Pakistani

FROM PAGE 16

papers that would allow Khan to slip back into the United States.

According to the FBI, Khan planned to carry out attacks on gasoline stations on his return to the country.

The prosecution at the trial had relied largely on Paracha's confession to FBI agents which he later recanted, saying that it had been secured under pressure and insisting he had no connection with Al-Qaeda.

His argument was dismissed by US District Court Judge Sidney Stein who said Paracha was fully aware of who he had been dealing with.

## Jagannath varsity

FROM PAGE 1

activists of BCL, JCD and some leftwing student organisations.

BCL university unit President Kamrul Hasan Riron, General Secretary Gazi Abu Sayeed, JCD university unit President ABD Parvez Reza and other leaders were present at the meeting with Vice Chancellor Prof Sirajul Islam Khan.

However, ICS university unit President Nizamul Islam Nayeem denied the allegation of carrying out fresh attacks on their rivals.

The main entrance of the university has been closed and a huge number of law enforcers have been deployed all around the campus.

Access to the campus has been restricted for all except teachers.

The authorities assured that students with IDs would be allowed to enter the campus on July 24.

A seven-member committee headed by Registrar Abu Hossain Siddiqui has been formed to probe the violence and the committee is to submit its report within 10 days, said the authorities.

### Lifschultz

FROM PAGE 16

of Purna Chandra Mandal that no man under law could be sentenced to death were he not given the right of adequate defence. Later as the president, however, Sayem reaffirmed the death sentence on Taher within 24 hours of the verdict, Lifschultz said.

Describing Sayem's action as a "phenomenon of a judge acting as a criminal", Lifschultz said it was more than a simple example of human hypocrisy.

He also criticised the role of the then chief prosecutor former justice ATM Afzal saying the chief prosecutor was to be rewarded after the trial with an appointment to the position of a judge at the Dhaka High Court and would become chief justice of the Supreme Court. But a worried man in 1976, Afzal anxiously claimed to his colleagues that he was stunned more than anyone at the sentence of death, Lifschultz said.

"Both the deliberate targeting by Hezbollah of Israeli population centres with hundreds of indiscriminate weapons and Israel's disproportionate use of force and collective punishment of the Lebanese people must stop," Annan said.

He proposed a blueprint calling for the deployment of a stabilization force and for Hezbollah to release two Israeli soldiers whose capture 10 days ago unleashed the Israeli onslaught on its northern neighbour.

But both Israel and Hezbollah rejected the call.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah issued a defiant new message that Israel's firepower was failing to dent its fundamentalist Shiite movement and vowed he would only release the soldiers in a prisoner swap.

"Even the whole universe would not be able to secure the release of the two Israeli soldiers unless there are indirect negotiations and an exchange of prisoners," he said.

"All of Israel's claims to have hit half of our missile potential and arsenal are nothing but erroneous words," Nasrallah said, warning of "more surprises" to come. "The leadership of Hezbollah has not

## Israel mobilises troops

FROM PAGE 1

stronghold near the site of ancient Roman temple ruins -- and one in the southern port city of Tyre.

The Israeli military said two Israeli soldiers died in the fighting and several guerrillas were killed. Hezbollah's Al-Manar television said three Israeli soldiers were killed but did not mention guerrilla casualties.

Two Apache attack helicopters collided in an accident northern Israel near the Lebanon border early Friday, killing one air force officer and injuring three others, two seriously, Israeli officials said. Al-Jazeera reported that four soldiers were killed in the crash, but did not give a source.

The commander of Israel's air force appointed an inquiry team to determine the cause.

Two Israeli soldiers were also seriously wounded when rockets fired from Lebanon exploded in the northern port city of Haifa, the latest salvos in a deluge of nearly 1,000 rocket attacks since cross-border violence flared on July 12.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Thursday demanded an immediate ceasefire, highlighting the human suffering caused by the deadliest cross-border fighting in a quarter century that has also killed 33 Israelis.

"Both the deliberate targeting by Hezbollah of Israeli population centres with hundreds of indiscriminate weapons and Israel's disproportionate use of force and collective punishment of the Lebanese people must stop," Annan said.

He proposed a blueprint calling for the deployment of a stabilization force and for Hezbollah to release two Israeli soldiers whose capture 10 days ago unleashed the Israeli onslaught on its northern neighbour.

But both Israel and Hezbollah rejected the call.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah issued a defiant new message that Israel's firepower was failing to dent its fundamentalist Shiite movement and vowed he would only release the soldiers in a prisoner swap.

"Even the whole universe would not be able to secure the release of the two Israeli soldiers unless there are indirect negotiations and an exchange of prisoners," he said.

"All of Israel's claims to have hit half of our missile potential and arsenal are nothing but erroneous words," Nasrallah said, warning of "more surprises" to come. "The leadership of Hezbollah has not

been touched."

Israeli troops had battled guerrillas long into the night Thursday after mounting an incursion into Lebanon, leaving four soldiers dead and two Hezbollah fighters. Another soldier was killed when two combat helicopters collided.

Israel has made no secret of its desire to liquidate Nasrallah and has already launched air raids destroying his offices and home and dropped 20 tonnes of bombs on what it believed to be a bunker where leaders were hiding.

Defense Minister Ehud Olmert had warned Thursday that Israel would launch a full-scale ground invasion if necessary to crush Hezbollah, which has long been a thorn in the side of the Jewish state.

Defense Minister Ehud Olmert had warned Thursday that Israel would launch a full-scale ground invasion if necessary to crush Hezbollah, which has long been a thorn in the side of the Jewish state.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy, on a visit to the region, issued appeals for a ceasefire and help for civilians, warning that the escalating conflict lead to a "catastrophe."

A despondent Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, who has issued desperate appeals for help from the international community, said there was no apparent settlement to end hostilities and blamed Israel's top ally in Washington.

"The United States is allowing Israel to pursue its aggression," he told AFP in an interview.

The US State Department said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would travel to the region as early as next week to press for a political solution but Washington is refusing to back calls for a ceasefire until Hezbollah halts its rocket attacks.

Israel, which has sent ground troops back into Lebanon for the first time since it ended its 22-year occupation in May 2000, has also been emboldened by strong public support at home.

A poll published Friday found that 95 percent believed that the military action against Hezbollah was "justified and correct".

But even in Israel, doubts were emerging about the effectiveness of an offensive that has failed to stop Hezbollah fire, eliminate its leadership or push fighters back from the border.

The tiny Mediterranean island is however reeling from the influx, battling to find temporary accommodation and flights for the estimated 70,000 people expected to arrive from Lebanon at the height of the holiday season.

Thousands of Lebanese, in cars, trucks and minibuses, are also streaming out of southern Lebanon, where Israel's massive bombardment has left a trail of destruction and raised fears of a humanitarian catastrophe because of a shortage of food and medicines.

"The most basic human rights of the population are at risk or are being violated, including their rights to life, health and food," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said.

Israel is also pushing on with its air, sea and ground offensive on the Gaza Strip, where at least 106 people have been killed in two weeks, and warned civilians that homes storing weaponry were now targets.

The operation was launched with the aim of retrieving a soldier snatched by Palestinian militants and stopping rocket fire.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, whose Hamas-led government has seen its ministries bombed and ministers arrested, warned Arabs and Palestinians were at "strategic risk" from Israel's parallel offensives.

Israel has imposed an air and sea blockade on Lebanon, put its only international airport out of action, bombed houses, roads, bridges, factories, warehouses and trucks, creating scenes reminiscent of the 1975-1990 civil war.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he was willing to open up a humanitarian corridor to ease the crisis.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy, on a visit to the region, issued appeals for a ceasefire and help for civilians, warning that the escalating conflict lead to a "catastrophe."

"We placed the reform proposals because we want a free, fair and neutral election. We do not want anyone's favour," Hasina said, adding that it is necessary to safeguard people's democratic rights to voting.

"If votes are not protected, the accountability of a government does not sustain," the former prime minister said, adding that a government indulges in corruption, torturing and repressing people when it has lack of accountability.

Hasina said if the PM thinks that she will hold a national election according to her wish, she is completely wrong. "We will not allow such election in the country," Hasina asserted.

Accusing late president Ziaur Rahman of having introduced the "vote stealing culture" in the country, Hasina said the nation could not be freed from that culture even today.

She accused the alliance government of killing opposition leaders and activists in "crossfire" without any trial using the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). "Such extrajudicial killings are against human rights and the constitution," she said.

The AL president feared the government might kill and harass her party leaders ahead of the election as it