

Blasts, clashes kill 20 in Iraq

Two more US soldiers slain

AGENCIES, Mosul

A suicide bomber blew up a fuel truck outside a police center in the Iraqi city of Mosul yesterday, killing 11 people, and rebels fired mortar rounds at another station in coordinated attacks, police and doctors said.

The blast, heard across Mosul, a flashpoint of insurgents north of Baghdad, left nine charred bodies and wounded 26 people, police said.

Shortly after the explosion, insurgents fired mortar shells at another police center and clashed with police. Nine more people were killed in the violence.

Another police source said a car bomb, also driven by a suicide bomber, could have exploded before the suicide truck bomb. The governor imposed a curfew and Iraqi forces were patrolling the city, a Reuters reporter in Mosul said.

Mosul, Iraq's third largest city, has witnessed a recent escalation of violence by Sunni insurgents and between Sunni Arabs and ethnic Kurds vying to control the urban area and the surrounding area.

Last month, a car bomb followed by a suicide attacker strapped with an explosive vest killed 18 people and wounded 11 near a passing Iraqi army and police patrol in a town near Mosul.

In November 2004, the entire police force in Mosul disintegrated after an insurgent offensive. It was rebuilt with the help of the U.S. military.

Sunni Arab insurgents battling U.S. troops and the Shi'ite-led government

in Baghdad frequently attack Iraq's security forces. Building Iraq's police and army is a key part of Washington's plan for an eventual pullout of its troops.

Meanwhile, two US soldiers were killed in fighting in Iraq, one in the restive city of Ramadi and one in Baghdad, the latest deaths in an ongoing surge in American casualties, the US military reported on Thursday.

One soldier died Wednesday of wounds received in enemy action in Ramadi, in the insurgency-prone western Anbar province, while the other died the same day in Baghdad when gunmen attacked his patrol.

With 10 US servicemen killed on Tuesday, the total number of American fatalities has reached 69 since the beginning of the month, while the number who have died since the start of the war has climbed to 2,778, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures. (Reuters, AFP)

Rocket attack in Pakistan suspends train service

AFP, Quetta

Suspected tribal insurgents yesterday attacked a passenger train with a rocket and small arms fire in the restive southwestern Pakistani province of Baluchistan, causing train services in the region to be suspended, an official said.

The attack came near Mach, some 65 kilometers (40 miles) south of Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan, and damaged the engine but caused no casualties, railway official Javed Ahmed told AFP.

"Quetta Express was coming from the eastern city of Lahore towards Quetta when a rocket and small arms fire hit it," he said.

"We have suspended train services in the region for the time being," Ahmed said, adding that an engine had been sent to bring the train, which is sheltering in a tunnel, to Quetta.

Mineral-rich but sparsely populated Baluchistan has witnessed heavy attacks on security forces, oil installations and railway tracks since an insurgency erupted in early 2005. The violence has since claimed hundreds of lives.

The attacks have been blamed on tribal rebels who are demanding more political rights and a greater share of profits from the region's natural resources.

Baluchistan has been tense since the killing of rebel tribal chieftain Nawab Akbar Bugti in a cave hideout in an army operation on August 26.

His death sparked violence that left 10 people dead in bomb blasts, attacks and clashes with police.

It was not immediately clear whether anyone on board the small Antonov-2 had survived.

The crash happened near an airfield in the Urt-Chirchik district of Tashkent province while the civilian plane was carrying out a military training flight, the ministry said.

"It lost control and carried out an emergency landing outside the grounds of the airport. As a result 15 people were killed -- two members of the crew and 13 soldiers," the ministry said in a statement read out on state television.

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A government commission headed up the SNB security service has been set up to investigate the incident, it added. The defence and interior ministries and the prosecutor general's office were also investigating.

Delegates from several European countries, like UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium, as well as from Bangladeshis and South Asians living in Germany will participate in the meet. Volunteers from Bengali communities provide support to this conference.

Media partners of the conference include Halle University (www.suedasien.uni-halle.de) and several print media in Bangladesh. Further information is available on the web at www.bangladeshinfo.de. The organisers can be reached by e-mail at akbinnhanover@gmx.net.

Loans

FROM PAGE 1

Sources said around 310 ruling BNP leaders and activists have received loans with the help of influential local legislator Wadud Bhuiyan.

However, no indigenous people received the loans even though the district has four indigenous communities.

When asked about the indigenous people not getting the loans, Wadud said, "We received limited amount of money for this purpose and a large number of people to give loans to. We could not provide loans to the indigenous people but we gave them loans from other funds."

Upazila Nirbahi Office sources said 115 BNP activists from Khagrachari, 112 from Matiranga, 10 from Panchhari, 16 from Manikchhari, 39 from Mohalchhari and 18 from other areas received the loans.

Khagrachari Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Mannan said they distributed the loans according to the list provided by the legislator.

The interest-less loans were designed to help the destitute and the borrowers only have to return 80 percent of the money. The small 10,000 to 15,000 loans had to be repaid over two years.

SC to hear

FROM PAGE 1

According to attorney general's office, a seven-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain will take up the jail petitions for their admissibility as leave to appeal.

The petitioners are outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) supremo Abdur Rahman, second-in-command Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, military operation commander Ataur Rahman Sunny, Rahman's son-in-law Abdul Awal, and suicide bombers Iftekher Hassan Al Mamun and Khaled Saifullah.

The execution of their death sentences was stayed by a Supreme Court rule following submission of the jail petitions and it will continue until disposal of the petitions.

On May 29, a Barisal court sentenced to death Abdur Rahman, Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai and five other militants and acquitted one in the sensational Jhalakathi judges' killing case. Of them, suicide bomber Asadur Rahman Arif has been absconding since the incident.

On August 31, the High Court confirmed the death sentences awarded by the trial court.

Senior Assistant Judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed were killed in a suicide bomb attack at Purba Chakdatti in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year in the wake of a series of violent militant attacks across the country.

Saifur

FROM PAGE 1

Ltd Moulvibazar branch yesterday afternoon.

Saifur said the people of Sylhet region demonstrated against the Grameen Bank during the previous term of the BNP government and he had to go to the spot himself to sort the situation out.

He claimed that the current government has distributed more microcredit loans than the Grameen Bank. He said according to his knowledge none was able to relieve themselves of poverty with the help of microcredit only and they failed to become self-reliant.

Saifur alleged that Yunus was able to win the Nobel Peace Prize only because he has good relations with former US President Bill Clinton and New York Senator Hillary Clinton, who helped Yunus in this regard.

Saifur also criticised Yunus' recent announcement to form a new political party. The finance minister said great leaders like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman had formed political parties and their parties have been in power several times. But they could not solve all the problems of the people.

He criticised sending patients from government hospital to private institutions for diagnosis.

Dr Zafarullah suggested charging fees at the public hospitals for food and giving a list of medicines to be provided for reducing corruption.

Abdus Salam, a director of International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, opposed private practice by the government doctors. Instead of allowing them private practice the salary and facilities should be increased, he said.

He said the political parties should have commitment and be involved

for the last 19 days but in vain, he said in utter frustration.

"I start walking for the town (city) just after taking sehri at my house and reach here in two and a half hours every day," he said narrating his plight.

Tofazzal of the same village said, "Two people took me somewhere for some work three days ago but fled away taking my bicycle".

Another sufferer, Rabeya, said she could not sell her labour even for Tk 25 a day this season as against Tk 60 in other seasons.

Samjan Ali said he sold his only cow at Tk 9,000 last month as he did not find work.

And there are hundreds of people like Abdur Razzak of Nandangachhi in Chhagrhat, Hazrat Ali of Kakonhat, Samjan, Shariful and Altaf of Dangarhat, who are regularly seen waiting for jobs at different places in the city including Laxmipur, Gourhanga Rail Crossing, Talaimari and Kasiadanga Crossing.

On Tuesday, while this correspondent was talking to such day labourers at Laxmipur, one Khorshed Alam went there to hire some 50 labourers for some work. More than 100 labourers gathered around him but Alam was seen selecting only the young ones for the job.

He is a social business enterprise to help people get out of poverty," he was quoted by Yonhap news agency as saying.

Grameen Bank focuses mainly on women and is an inclusive bank. We never reject anybody," he said.

"What she has done is not our concern. What she will do next, that's our concern."

The biennial Seoul Peace Prize, established in 1990, marks the achievements of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games.

Other recipients have included UN secretary general Kofi Annan, former Czech Republic president Vaclav Havel, and international relief organizations such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and Oxfam.

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Tk 40 lakh bribe

FROM PAGE 1

premier hospital.

They suggested giving the hospital management the authority to hire and fire the employees to put an end to the mafia gang's dominance.

Often the doctors and nurses become hostage to the gang as the employees' jobs are not transferable. The corrupt employees are also involved with the piffage of medicine and medical equipment from the hospital.

The TIB report disclosed that 60 per cent of employees at the hospital got appointment by paying handsome amount as bribe.

The report found DMCH a 'den of corruption and mismanagement' where patients often face harassment and negligence by the doctors, nurses and employees.

The TIB recommended appointment of an ombudsman for health sector, increasing the number of beds, more allocation for equipment and increasing the allowances for the intern doctors at the hospital.

The TIB report also cited the areas of mismanagement in the hospital, particularly demanding bribe for seat allocation, medicine, extra care and appointment of food suppliers.

TIB trustee board Chairman Prof Muzaffar Ahmed chaired the discussion.

"The mafia gang is controlling everything from admission of the patients to appointment of employees," said Dr Sarwar Ali, former general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

He suggested autonomy of the hospital and said, "Without the authority to hire and fire, the hospital can not get rid of this evil cycle."

Echoing the same view, Dr Yasmin Ahmed said the situation is almost similar in all government-run hospitals in the country.

She suggested moral teachings to the students as well as technical knowledge for bringing discipline in the public hospitals.

Dr Abdul Mannan, former president of BMA, suggested medical education in mother tongue for better understanding of the patients' problems. He also suggested people's involvement with the hospital management for improving the situation.

Muzaffar Ahmed said the DMCH authorities did not provide required assistance for conducting the study and the TIB faced tremendous difficulties in getting information from the DMCH.

The report is still a draft and will be completed later, he said.

Half of the patients were not supposed to come to DMCH if they had been treated at the local hospitals, Dr Zafarullah said, adding that the situation will not improve if the influences of third grade employees are not curtailed.

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Abdus Salam, a director of International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, opposed private practice by the government doctors. Instead of allowing them private practice the salary and facilities should be increased, he said.

"We are making all-out preparations through holding meetings with all of our leaders as we doubt the government's sincerity in accepting our demands," Hasanul Haque Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, told The Daily Star.

The leaders said the government might reject the Hasani issue and meet several other demands. But the opposition will never accept a Hasani-led caretaker government, they asserted.

Sources in the opposition alliance said they are making thousands of oars and poles in different districts and upazillas. Top district and upazila level leaders are supervising their work. The senior leaders have also instructed them to supply several thousands oars and poles to the city in a couple of days.

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