

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 Shiite-led government

15 killed in Uzbekistan plane crash

AFP, Tashkent

Fifteen people were killed when an Uzbekistan Airways plane crashed due to poor weather while trying to land near the capital Tashkent yesterday, the emergency situations 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.

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

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

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.

8th Bangladesh meet

FROM PAGE 1

Aspects of the social, cultural, economic and political issues in Bangladesh and topics of strengthening relations between Bangladesh and Germany/Europe, says a press release of the organisers.

The main objective of the 2006 conference is to strengthen the dialogue and exchange between Germany/Europe and Bangladesh to achieve the "UN Millennium Goals 2015" by developing civil society partnership worldwide.

Expatriates in Germany and Europe, members of non-government organisations (NGOs), and personalities from educational, political and cultural fields will take part in this conference.

German members of parliament (MPs) and members of European parliament (MEPs) are also invited.

Previous conferences helped establish a positive image of Bangladesh within the German community, thus changing the views about Bangladesh in Europe.

The organisers are supported by the Federal State of Lower Saxony, the National Ministry for Development, Church Funds for North-South-Dialogue and independent sponsors. The cultural programme is organised in cooperation with the City of Hanover, Department for Culture and Intercultural Communication, and One World Fund of the Catholic Church.

This year, the conference offers workshops on three areas: Economic Exchange, Dialogue in Science and Dialogue in Art and Culture.

The pre-election political situation in Bangladesh will be discussed in the beginning, when Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, the largest circulated English newspaper in Bangladesh, will present his paper.

Other notable guests are Prof Nisara Hossain, Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University, famous singer Samina Chowdhury and film director Shaheen Dill-Riaz, whose new documentary "Shilpo, Shohor Shoptok" is going to be shown on the "Bangla-Europe Culture-Nights".

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 near-daily 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.

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.bangladesh-info.de. The organisers can be reached by e-mail at akbin-hannover@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 provided loans to the indigenous people but we gave them loans from other funds."

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

Khagrachhari 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

sentences.

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) supreme Abdul 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 Iftekhar 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 Abdul 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 Sohail Ahmed were killed in a suicide bomb attack at Purba Chadkati 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 Moulibazar 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 unit 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.

Monga returns

FROM PAGE 1

way 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 Abdul Razzak of Nandaganchhi in Charghat, Hazrat Ali of Kakonhat, Samjan, Shariful and Altaf of Dangerhat, who are regularly seen waiting for jobs at different places in the city including Laxmipur, Gourhangra Rail Crossing, Talaimari and Kasiadanga Crossing.

On Tuesday, while this correspondent was talking to such day labourers at Laxmipur, one Khorsheed 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.

Yunus cap

FROM PAGE 1

"their efforts to create economic and social development from below."

The success of Grameen Bank in offering microcredit without collateral to the poorest has been emulated in 23 countries, according to the Grameen Foundation.

Seeing how rural Bangladeshis struggled to borrow sums as low as \$7 dollars in the early 1970s, Yunus said he decided to offer himself as a guarantor to help them receive bank loans.

"Microcredit for me is a social business enterprise, an 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.

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 pilferage 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 Muzaffer 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.

Muzaffer 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.

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

with hospital management for improving the situation.

The TIB investigation disclosed that 71 per cent patients did not find doctors at the outdoor during the duty hours.

Twenty per cent patients do not get seats at the hospital and on an average spend four days on the floor. Fifty per cent outdoor patients were suggested specific private diagnostic centres for test.

Sixty per cent patients take hospital foods and 31 per cent described its standard as unsatisfactory, the report said.

Opposition

FROM PAGE 1

in the villages. Besides, we will also go for indefinite countrywide shutdown to press home our demands," Tofail said.

"A grave political situation would emerge in the country if peaceful solution does not come out of the October 23 dialogue."

To launch the final spell of agitation, the opposition sits with their leaders of Dhaka city's thana and ward level units at 2:00pm today and with those of its front organisations tomorrow.

The leaders and activists are likely to be instructed to take control of the streets and face the ruling party men 'politically' if everything goes otherwise.

All upazila and district units of the opposition's front organisations will also sit simultaneously tomorrow for preparations.

As a warm-up step, the opposition will stage countrywide demonstrations on October 22 -- the day before the final round of talks -- to observe the day as the "reform proposals implementation day". It has already applied for Paltan Maidan for holding there a massive rally from where the opposition top brass will direct the city leaders and activists.

At these meetings, all the unit level leaders will be asked to bring to the capital thousands of demonstrators with sticks, oars and poles of boats from across the country to besiege Dhaka indefinitely.

The opposition leaders have said October 23 is very important for the national politics. If the dialogue failed to reach a consensus, political conflict is a must, they said, adding, the government will have to take all responsibilities for any untoward incidents.

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

Sources in the opposition alliance said they are making thousands of oars and poles in different districts and upazilas. 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.

"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 Jatia Samajtantrik Dal, told The Daily Star.

Islami Bank

FROM PAGE 1

per cent (Tk 108 crore) while Siddique & Co has been listed as the top defaulter with a total Tk 33 crore classified loan.

The bank has recently initiated steps to recover the money and filed a criminal case, to make an instance, against a defaulter who owes about Tk 9 crore.

Islami Bank former director Fazle Azim, who is also the chairman of Takfuli Islami Insurance Ltd, took a loan of Tk 4.52 crore for his Azim Garment Ltd.

"The borrower has sufficient collateral and we have been pressing him to repay the money," Islami Bank Executive President Abdul Rakib told The Daily Star. "If he wants to come back as a member of the bank's board of directors, we hope he will make the repayment soon."

Islami Bank has declared Tk 8 crore of the total Tk 19 crore outstanding loan of Quality Timber Ltd defaulted. Haji Afzal Hossain, vice-chairman of Social Investment Bank Ltd (SIBL), owns the company.

Islami Bank high officials recently asked the Bangladesh Bank to withdraw Haji Afzal from the board of directors of SIBL as he has violated the Bank Company Act by becoming a loan defaulter.

The top defaulter of Islami Bank, ship-breaking company Siddique & Co, was given the loan of Tk 33 crore about five years ago. Recently the loan was written off, bank sources said.

A high official of Islami Bank said, "We have filed a case against Siddique & Co and it has pledged to repay the money within three years."

The second top defaulter of Islami Bank is the Deen Timber, owned by Shamsul Haq, with a classified loan of Tk 30 crore. Identifying Shamsul Haq as a "wilful" defaulter, an Islami Bank official said both criminal and civil cases have been filed against him, but the defaulter also filed a counter case against the bank. "We are yet to recover the money as the cases have not been settled," the official added.

Joint Silver Traders owes Tk 20 crore to Islami Bank and its owner Babul Akhter is an importer in Jessore. Bank sources said the organisation has been listed as a defaulter this year and presently a negotiation with it is going on.

Jamuna fertiliser factory down with glitches

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Production at Jamuna Fertiliser Factory remained suspended due to a mechanical malfunction since Tuesday night, keeping the farmers in 19 districts in fear of a possible urea scarcity.

Authorities detected a mechanical fault in the ammonia plant of the country's highest urea producing factory at Tarakandi in Sarishabari, Jamalpur and immediately halted the production.

The engineering department of the factory instantly identified the point and reasons behind the fault. Department officials started repairing work at 6:00am Wednesday but could not confirm when production might resume, factory sources said.

Earlier on February 3 this year, another fault in the same plant stopped production of the factory that produces about 1,750 tonnes urea a day.

A team of experts from abroad had repaired the fault with the help of local engineers. But production often remains suspended due to unknown reasons, the sources added.

Factory workers yesterday alleged that ignorance, irregularities and corruption are the main reasons behind malfunction in the ammonia plant and halting production again and again.

A section of dishonest fertiliser traders is preparing to create artificial scarcity of urea showing the production halt, they added.

The managing director and the general manager of the fertiliser factory could not be contacted over phone despite repeated attempts.

Shazneen case

FROM PAGE 20

Prevention Act. The acquittal order was sent to the trial court that on September 2, 2003 sentenced Shaniram and five others to death for raping and killing Shazneen.

The bench also upheld the verdict of the lower court on five convicts -- Shahid, Hassan, Badal, Minu and Parvin.

At one stage, the judge asked the lawyers to show the acquittal order but they failed to do so.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, a student of class nine of Scholastica School and the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Limited, was raped and killed at her Gulshan residence in Dhaka on April 23, 1998.

The following day, Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan Police Station accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his residence.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) pressed charges against Shahid, contractor Hassan, his assistant Badal, carpenter Shaniram, and domestic helps Minu and Parvin on September 17, 1998.

The court framed charges against Shahid and five others on November 1 of the same year.

Following the order, the defence lawyers submitted a criminal appeal to the HC challenging the legality of the two cases filed for the same incident.

The HC on February 7 stayed proceedings of the murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

The HC had also said the stay order would be valid till disposal of the case, pending with the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka.

Jobs in Malaysia

FROM PAGE 20

temporary ban on October 4 on hiring manpower from Bangladesh alleging that none of the 22,000 workers, who were given job approval and whose migration was scheduled to begin in August, entered Malaysia by October 3.

Malaysia also warned the outsourcing companies and employers in Malaysia that it would not approve job demand letters if they fail to take the approved workers by October 20.

Baira however said the delay was caused due to intervention both by the ministry as well as the country's high commission in Malaysia. It also said though Malaysia blamed it for the delay, Kuala Lumpur did not issue calling visas until October 4.

Referring to the state minister's meeting with Baira leaders alleging overcharging and issuance of the show cause notice, sources said the minister is doing all these to share the money overcharged from the workers.

The state minister could not be contacted for his comment despite repeated attempts.

Asked about Baira office in Kuala Lumpur, its Secretary General Ali Haider Chowdhury said the trade body's rules clearly allow it to open liaison office in any country for market promotion. "So, the show cause notice served by the ministry has no ground," he said.

He also asked why the state minister did not raise this question when he himself inaugurated the computer system in Baira's Kuala Lumpur office a month ago.

Transparent ballot box

FROM PAGE 1

million to produce the necessary transparent ballot boxes required in Bangladesh for the next election.

EC Secretary Abdul Rashid Sarkar said, "It is impractical to use transparent ballot boxes in the next general elections."

"The transparent ballot boxes will cost \$5 million," he told reporters at his office yesterday, adding, "They will not be able to deliver such requirement before two years."

EC Joint Secretary M Zokoria also echoed him.

EC officials said the Canadian High Commission's letter issued to the chief election commissioner and the secretaries general of BNP and AL advised to leave the issue.

AL and BNP officials said they did not receive any such letter from the Canadian High Commission as of 7:00pm last night.

The European Union on July 18 last year offered to provide the EC with transparent ballot boxes for the next parliamentary polls to stop irregularities in voting. The EC, however, showed little interest.

WORK ORDER ISSUED

The EC Secretariat yesterday issued the work order for printing the updated voter list for the next general elections.

Describing himself as the "most relaxed" now, the EC Secretary told the press, "Everything relating to holding the next general election is going on the right track."

The EC has completed selecting 38 vendors for the printing task and their work order was issued yesterday, Sarkar said, adding, "We expect the printed voter list to be available in our hand by November 31."

A total of 185 organisations took part in the tender process for printing the voter list.

Jumatul Wida

FROM PAGE 1

She also prayed for peace, prosperity and progress in personal, social and national life.

On the occasion of Jum'atul Wida, Baitul Mukarram National Mosque has taken up programmes in collaboration with the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.

The mosque will arrange additional prayer mats and ablution facilities for the devotees.

"Besides, the mosque has taken steps to ensure all facilities to the devotees who will come to the mosque on the holy night of Qadr, said an official release.

Saudi prince keen

FROM PAGE 1

government wants to sell the rest shares in the bank, the prince will buy those.

The prince is also interested in investing in other sectors in Bangladesh, he said adding that authorised representatives of the Saudi prince are conducting studies to assess the potential fields.

Talking about the Saudi prince's future reform plans for the Rupali Bank, he said the prince will introduce helicopter service, set up offices abroad to offer remittance services, initiate a US\$ 20 million fund for human resource development and put emphasis on small and medium enterprises.

"The prince also informed us that he will not shut down any branch of the bank, rather he will introduce a scheme to modernise the bank," Chaudhury said.

At present, a representative committee of the Saudi prince headed by Sir Frank Peters is working with the Bangladesh committee, formed by the Privatisation Commission, to prepare a deed of share sell and purchase document, he said adding that all the procedures will be completed.

pledged by the commission by next Sunday.

"Now, it depends on the arrival of the Saudi prince in Bangladesh to sign the agreement."

The prince will have to pay \$330 million in a single chunk before signing the sale and purchase agreement