

Suicide bomber kills 3 in Israeli resort

AFP, Tel Aviv

A suicide bomber blew himself up in a bakery in Israel's Red Sea resort of Eilat yesterday, killing three people in the first such attack inside the Jewish state in nine months.

"After examining the site of the explosion a connection was found between the explosives and one of the bodies and we now believe the explosion was caused by a suicide bomber," national police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP.

"This was a terror-related incident."

An anonymous caller claimed the attack - the first ever in Eilat - in a telephone call to AFP on behalf of three Palestinian militant groups, but his claim could not be authenticated.

Israeli police had earlier said the powerful blast, which ripped through the Lehamin Bakery next to a small shopping centre in Eilat at 9:40 am local time, had been an accident.

Rosenfeld said three people were killed in addition to the bomber, who had gone into the bakery carrying the bomb in a backpack and then set it off.

Human remains were splattered outside the bakery, television images showed, as dozens of police and rescuers swarmed the ruins of the building.

"The explosion was massive and the whole place is wrecked," a paramedic from the Magen David Adom medical services told AFP.

It was the first attack inside Israel since April 17, 2006, when nine people were killed in Tel Aviv in a suicide bombing claimed by the Palestinian radical group Islamic Jihad.

The Eilat attack came amid tentative efforts to put the Middle East peace process back on track but also against a backdrop of deadly Palestinian factional fighting in the Gaza Strip that has left 32 people dead in four days.

Several people were treated for shock, but the blast did not leave anyone wounded, Roy Rosenfeld, a Magen David Adom spokesman who was among the first to arrive on the scene, told AFP.

"The shop itself is destroyed, but there is not much damage outside," he said.

In a telephone call to AFP in Ramallah, an anonymous spokesman claimed responsibility on behalf of the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, the Fatah-linked Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the previously unknown Army of Believers.

But the authenticity of his claim could not be independently verified and no official statement was released as is frequently the case after suicide attacks inside Israel.

Roadblocks were set up outside Eilat, which lies on the southern-most tip of Israel on the border with Egypt and Jordan, and senior Israeli security officials were rushing to the scene, Israeli radio reported.

Israeli officials were quick to condemn the attack.

"At this stage it is unclear what the origin of the attack is," Miri Eisin, spokeswoman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, told AFP. "Israel is a

No interference

Earlier on Sunday, editors of national newspapers, news agencies and television channels, and senior journalists categorically told Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hosein that they would not abide by the restrictions imposed on the media by the emergency rules.

"The government is deeply aware of the very positive role the media has been playing during the current critical period in the nation's history," reads the home ministry clarification.

The government is also profoundly concerned about the need for preserving freedom of the press even under these circumstances, it said. "However, it has been brought to the notice of the government that there exist some questions in certain quarters about the possibility of curtailing press freedom on account of the above gazette."

The clarification went on, "The government wishes to reiterate unequivocally that no restrictions have been imposed on the media's freedom or functions. However, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the government will soon invite media representatives to discuss in order to reach a workable solution on the issue."

Rezauddin Ahmed, editor of the News Today, said he is happy that the government has clarified its position saying that it has imposed no restriction on the media.

"But the 5th clause in the Emergency Power Rules 2007 which is hanging upon the media as a sword should be withdrawn," he said.

The clause is a 'sleeping tiger' that may wake up and bite anytime, he added.

Welcoming the proposal of discussion, Editor of the Jugantor Abed Khan said, "It is possible to ensure press freedom through discussion, while not compromising on the question of fundamental rights. And we will try for it in the proposed discussion."

Atiqullah Khan Masud, Editor of the Jangkanta, noted that the present caretaker government did not require imposing the clause regarding media restriction as the media cooperated with the government from the very beginning.

"The press cannot be controlled by imposing any rule that may rather

nation that is continuously confronting terror and terror threats. Israel is always on guard against such attacks."

Foreign ministry spokesman Mark Regev told AFP that the "authorities are still trying to get details on the origin of the bomber and how he got through. It is clear that the terror threat is very real and very present."

A top aide to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, Yasser Abed Rabbo, also slammed the bombing.

"We reject these acts and we do not believe that they are in the interest of the Palestinian cause and that they blacken the image of the Palestinian people," Abed Rabbo told AFP by telephone from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where he and Abbas were attending an African Union summit.

The last suicide bombing in Tel Aviv left nine people dead and dozens wounded after a Palestinian bomber blew himself up next to a fast food stand at lunchtime.

Israel has been wracked by a wave of suicide bombings that reached their peak during the Palestinian uprising that broke out in September 2000.

Tuesday's attack comes just days before the international quartet for Middle East peace is to meet in Washington on February 2 and ahead of a planned meeting between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and Olmert.

In August 2005, one of a barrage of rockets fired from the neighbouring Jordanian port of Aqaba in an Al-Qaeda claimed attack against a US warship landed next to the airport in Eilat.

Major shakeup

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inspector general (DIG) to Police Headquarters (PHQ).

Faruque Ahmed was made commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP), Moniruzzaman additional commissioner of DMP, Sohrab Hossain commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP), Fatema Begum was made DIG of SB, Khan Sayeed Hassan commissioner of Barisal Metropolitan Police (BMP) and Mazarul Haq was made commandant of Police Training College, Tangail.

Benazir Ahmed was made DIG to PHQ, Najibur Rahman DIG of Armed Police Battalion (APBn), Saiful Alami DIG of Highway Police, AKM Shahidul Haq DIG of Rajshahi Range and Syed Tawfiq Uddin Ahmed was made additional DIG of Dhaka.

Meanwhile, in a reshuffle in the army, DG of SSF Major General Syed Fatehmi Ahmed Rumi has been made GOC of Rangpur region while GOC of Bogra Major General Sheikh Munirul Islam new DG of SSF, according to the UNB.

According to a reliable source, BMA Commandant Brig General Shamim has been made GOC of Bogra.

Traders fined

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against three eluding shop owners.

Raiding nine other shops at Moulvibazar, the court found the traders selling chemicals used for dyeing textile as food colour and charged them Tk 120,000.

The court fined three sellers of spices Tk 30,000 for using faulty weighing stones. A seller was found selling 400 grams of spice for 500 grams by cheating with faulty weighing unit, sources said.

Later the court raided a polythene factory at Umesh Dutta Lane. At the factory gate there was a signboard that reads 'Mortgaged with the Imamganj branch of Dhaka Bank'. But the court's verification with the particular bank found the claim to be false.

Breaking the lock, the court members entered inside and found a polythene factory there. The court sealed the factory and instructed the police to seize the machinery on January 31.

The court also raided an unauthorised mosquito coil factory. Failing to find anybody there, the court ordered the Lalbagh Police Station to arrest factory owner Siraj Miah.

The mobile court continued the drive from noon to 7:00pm.

BOGRADIVE

A mobile court led by Magistrate AK Md Shamsul Ahsan fined Tk 4 lakh 50 thousand for preparing and marketing fake oral saline, salt, vermicelli, biscuit and keeping restaurant kitchens unhygienic, reports our Bogra correspondent.

The court fined Fiam Food Product Tk 1.5 lakh for making and keeping for sale spurious oral saline and banned polythene bags. Police arrested Mamunur Rashid and Salim for nonpayment of the fine money.

The mobile court collected Tk 3 lakh as fine from unhygienic establishments like Salim Hotel where the cook had infectious skin diseases in hand.

Ashura today

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was brutally slaughtered. The bizarre incident happened at Karbala in Iraq.

According to Islamic history, this dispute was a result of a disagreement among Muslims on the question of succession after the demise of Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph.

The day is a public holiday. Various organisations will arrange programmes in observance of Ashura. Tazia procession by mourners is a main feature of the occasion.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

They urged the people to exercise such spirit of sacrifice in national life to achieve social peace and well-being.

They also prayed for salvation of the departed souls of the martyrs who laid down lives at Karbala.

14-party urges

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credible election as early as possible. Showing our respect to his pledge, we urge him to hand over power to an elected government through holding an election after reconstituting the election commission and completing other necessary work related to the election," Abdul Jalil told journalists at a press briefing last night.

Jalil, the 14-party coordinator, also said at the briefing at his Gulshan residence that the 14-party alliance sat to review the present situation of the country and to convey their message to the CG on press briefing last night.

Prior to the briefing, the 14-party held a meeting there to review the latest situation of the country. AL presidium member Abdur Razzak chaired the meeting.

Jalil, also AL general secretary, demanded the CG arrest all top corrupt individuals immediately.

He urged the CA to implement his promise of taking stern action to root out corruption from the country.

He also urged the CA to establish rule of law in the country through taking stern action against the criminals and their godfathers.

Senior 14-party leaders including Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Kazi Zafarullah, Obaidul Quader, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Bimal Biswas, Dilip Barua, Syed Zafar Sazzad, Haji Abdus Samad were present at the meeting among others.

Butenis

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Pakistan, Butenis took up her Bangladeshi assignment only about a year ago.

"Once the President has designated a successor to Ambassador Butenis, the Department of State will do everything possible to ensure a smooth transition," the release added.

Patricia Butenis was confirmed as Ambassador to Bangladesh by the Senate on February 16, 2006, and sworn in on March 17, 2006. She is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, at the rank of Minister-Counselor. Prior to her assignment in Bangladesh, Butenis was Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Islamabad (2004-2006).

Butenis joined the Foreign Service in 1980. She served as Vice Consul in Karachi (1980-82), Vice Consul/Political Officer in San Salvador (1982-85), Consul in New Delhi (1985-88), El Salvador Desk Officer (1988-90), and Consul (American Citizen Services Chief) in Bogota, Colombia (1990-93).

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Importers

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demand during the peak Boro season.

The meeting also decided to deploy law enforcers at every point of offloading and uploading fertiliser for transporting to the district and upazila levels, he noted.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) will also carry fertiliser to the crisis-stricken areas, the official said. The crisis mainly prevails in the areas where there is no depot of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA), he added.

Depts of Public Works Department (PWD) and Local Government Engineering Department will also be used for storing up fertiliser if needed, he further said.

Asked if there was any decision on the sale of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation fertiliser, which failed to get a higher price, he replied in the negative.

The officials from the ministries of agriculture, home, communications, industries, shipping, establishment and Petrobangla, BCIC, Railway, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) and importers were present at the meeting.

FERTILISER SEIZED IN SUNAMGANJ

Our Sylhet correspondent reported that the paramilitary BDR on Sunday night seized 783 bags of urea fertiliser from four shops of bordering Banglabazar under Dobraabazar upazila in Sunamganj and arrested four in this connection.

The BB investigation gathered that all the four foreign companies shared the same address in Hong Kong and had never made any contact to negotiate with the BB during Oriental Bank's liquidity problems. They were said to be located at Unit 801, 8th Floor, Pacific House, 20 Queens Road, Central Hong Kong.

The report says the only person who approached the BB out of concern for the foreign companies was Obaidul himself and it indicates that he holds the shares in the name of those companies.

The four foreign companies are Founder International Investment Ltd with 45,000 shares or 8.6%, Onbright Corporation Ltd with 43,769 or 8.43%, Eagleway Investment Ltd with 45,000 shares or 8.67%, and Sun Ascent Holding Ltd with 45,000 shares or 8.67% of the

Yunus slates 'financial apartheid'

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Referring to the menace of terrorism, he said, "we have to fight terrorism but not through military action, but by addressing its root cause, which is poverty."

By giving collateral-free loan of over six billion dollars to seven million people in Bangladesh, 97 percent of whom are women, the Grameen Bank has proved that the poorest of the society is bankable and credit-worthy, Prof Yunus observed.

The Nobel laureate pointed out that 58 percent of Grameen Bank's borrowers have risen above the poverty line after receiving loans and the bank has not taken any money from donors since 1995.

"Micro-credit," he said, "has created a silent and non-violent revolution."

The Grameen Bank has focused on women because loan given through them has made a "deeper impact" on their families and because women should have a greater role in decision-making in families, Prof Yunus said.

Bangladesh has made major strides in cutting down infant mortality rates, women's empowerment and telecom sector and "we are now working on to bring information and communication technology," he said adding "We are looking at India in this regard."

The Nobel laureate chose the occasion to announce that Grameen Bank would be opening an office in Mumbai -- the first in India -- in the next few days.

Yunus noted that Gandhiji's historical Satyagraha movement of peaceful and passive resistance has changed the history of not only the sub-continent but of the entire world adding that his messages are as important to the world today as ever before," she said.

Pointing out that the end of the Cold War has not brought about peace to the extent desired, Sonia said the world today is faced with the problem of terrorism -- religious, ethnic and political.

While the underlying causes behind terrorism have to be understood, it should not be rationalised or romanticised, she noted.

The Congress chief said Gandhiji, while espousing Satyagraha, never claimed to be

based on no-loss and no-dividend principles and profit earned should be ploughed back into the business.

Through social business, all social-economic problems and the problems of 60 percent of the global population living below poverty line can be addressed, he observed adding that the rich individuals and families of the world would find it attractive.

Yunus said that he was a firm advocate of developing Chittagong as a regional port and aviation hub to provide maritime and air links with Southeast Asia.

He also rooted for an international highway through Bangladesh connecting the Saarc countries with ASEAN nations like -- Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

The Grameen Bank chief also proposed cooperation among the Saarc countries in harnessing the water resources of the South Asian region for hydro-electric power projects.

Earlier, inaugurating the two-day conference, Congress President and India's ruling United Progressive Alliance chief Sonia Gandhi said Satyagraha movement has changed the course of history and is a completely new tool to bring about social and political changes and for mass mobilisation.

"The core of Gandhiji's philosophy reverberates through the world more strongly today than ever before," she said.

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