

Gunmen kidnap and kill Iraqi mayor

Bombings kill 15

AP, AFP, Baghdad

The mayor of a small Shia village south of Baghdad was kidnapped on his way to work yesterday, and his bullet-riddled body was later found dumped along a highway, police and military officials said.

Iraqis are increasingly pessimistic about their future, according to an opinion poll published yesterday as the nation battles to curb relentless bloodshed on the fourth year anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Police said Khalaf Gharghan, the mayor of Dijelah, was abducted by gunmen about 300 yards from his home. Witnesses said the kidnappers ambushed Gharghan's car, dragged him out and sped away. Two bodyguards and a driver were left behind, they said.

Dijelah lies just south of Kut, 160km southeast of Baghdad. Kut is the capital of Wasit province.

Gharghan's body was later found dumped on a highway and brought to the Kut morgue, said morgue official Maamoun Ajeeb al-Rubaie. Another body, handcuffed and showing signs of torture, also turned up at the morgue Monday, he said.

Witnesses said Iraqi security forces were searching the area where the abduction took place.

Three coordinated car bombs and a mortar attack killed 15 people and wounded at least 35 in Iraq's northern

oil hub of Kirkuk yesterday, police said.

The first and the biggest attack, a car bomb near two mosques, killed 10 people and wounded eight, police Colonel Taha Salaheddin told AFP.

The bomb went off in central Kirkuk's Sector 90 district which houses the two mosques, one Shia and one Sunni, as well as the emergency police command, Salaheddin said.

He said 10 cars were completely burnt and 20 shops damaged.

The second car bomb went off in south Kirkuk's Ras Domneez market near a branch of the Islamic Bank, killing five people and wounding 26, he said.

Of the five killed, four were police men whose patrol was passing by at the time of the blast.

The mortar attack near the city's civil defence office left one civilian wounded, Salaheddin said, adding that the fourth car bomb targeted a senior officer from Saddam Hussein's former army and destroyed a communication tower but caused no casualties.

All the attacks took place within 30 minutes, with the first car bomb exploding at around 1:00 pm (1000 GMT), Salaheddin said.

Over the past few months, insurgents have stepped up attacks in Kirkuk, an ethnically mixed city claimed by both Arabs and Kurds.

MP Salahuddin

Shyampur police filed a fraud case against Salahuddin on March 4.

Nine other criminal cases were filed earlier against him with Shyampur, Jarabbari and Demra police stations on different dates. Later, he was taken on a five-day remand for interrogation in connection with three cases.

Obaidul Quader's bail sought

Defence lawyers yesterday sought bail for detained Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Obaidul Kader.

Judge Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka fixed April 15 for hearing the issue with lower court records.

Police had filed a general diary (GD) with Ramna Police Station

Amzad Sarkar

arrested 1,377 people across the country on various charges in the last 24 hours preceding 6:00am yesterday, according to a home ministry press release.

Our Nilphamari correspondent reported that Amzad, a former lawmaker from Nilphamari-4, and his associates appeared before the Court of First Class Magistrate Enamul Haque and prayed for bail as the same court had earlier issued arrest warrants against them for killing Rubel, a local BNP leader.

The court rejected the prayer and ordered to send them to jail.

Rubel was killed in a clash between the supporters of Amzad and his rival Mahfuzur Rahman, member of Public Service Commission, at Sipaiganj Bazar under Saidpur upazila on October 30 last year.

Later, Rubel's brother filed a murder case and the police made out a charge sheet against the ex-MP and his 13 supporters for killing Rubel, also a nephew of Mahfuzur.

Amzad is also an accused in four murder cases.

Our staff correspondent in Rajshahi reported that a speedy trial court sentenced BNP leader Hamid to three years' rigorous imprisonment and fined Tk 5,000, in default, he has to suffer imprisonment for six more months for assaulting a government official.

Hamid and his men fatally injured Chhaghat Upazila Project Implementation Officer Golam Rabbani with hammers on June 18, 2005 on his way back home from office.

CI sheets seized

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Hossain, the local union parishad chairman and president of the Kamrangirchhara thana unit of BNP. The committee also includes other local BNP leaders and activists.

The crack forces could not arrest anyone during the drive which continued till the afternoon.

A few days back the joint forces recovered 20 CI sheets of government relief fund from Monir's upazila parishad office and arrested him.

Local sources alleged although the government provided enough fund for construction of the community centre, the committee members rotted it with the CI sheets meant for government relief.

Immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of the community centre on May 4, 2006. The local zilla parishad implemented the project.

The process of filing a case was underway at the time of filing this report last night.

SQ Chy

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Chowdhury and his family had been dominating for long.

Led by Major Arif, the task force went to SQ Chowdhury's village home at Gahira under Raonan upazila.

The members of the task force talked to his family members and relatives and local people and enquired about his wealth, activities and different allegations brought against him, sources said.

The task force then visited Quader Nagar, a large estate established by the Chowdhury family, in Rangunia and talked to people present there to take an account of properties and activities of SQ Chowdhury.

The task force team also held a meeting with the officer-in-charge of the local police station and others concerned to enquire about the criminal charges lodged with them against SQ Chowdhury.

Ctg arms case

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firearms and ammunitions at the CUFL jetty on southern bank of the river Karnaphuli.

Out of 43 accused in the case, only two prime accused, Hafizur Rahman and Deen Mohammad, are now behind bars while 33 are released on bail and eight remain on the run, sources said.

Nepal leaders vow to hold polls by June

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's premier and its Maoist leader said yesterday they would hold elections by June as planned to ensure the sidelined king does not make a political comeback.

The two -- Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and former rebel leader Prachanda -- signed a landmark peace deal last year after King Gyanendra gave up absolute rule in the face of mass protests.

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alleging Quader to be involved in anarchy, sabotage and patronising of criminals. He was later given a one-month detention order under the Special Powers Act.

Obaidul Quader, listed in the second list of 50 corruption suspects, was arrested by the forces from the house of city AL leader Ali Newaz Khan in Khilgaon on March 9.

ntv MD SHOWNARRESTED

Private satellite TV station ntv's managing director Enayetur Rahman, former BNP MP Harunur Rashid (Chapainawabganj 3) and owner of a car sales centre were shown arrested yesterday in a case filed for evading tax during import of a luxury car by abusing duty-free car import privilege of a member of parliament (MP).

Metropolitan Magistrate MA Salam passed the order following a petition submitted by investigation officer Sub-Inspector Mizanur Rahman for showing them arrested in the case where he mentioned that they might be remanded in the future.

Tejgaon police on March 7 produced Enayetur Rahman, Harunur Rashid MP and Iftiqar Sadig, owner of Sky Autos, before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka. They were later sent to jail on a one-month detention order.

Harunur Rashid MP purchased a luxury sport utility vehicle -- a Hummer -- on April 25, 2005 under the duty-free privilege of an MP and later sold it to Iftiqar. By doing so, Harun violated his bond made to the parliament that he would use the vehicle for at least three years before changing ownership. Iftiqar later sold it to Enayet, said police in their forward report.

Kiddie park land

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According to Rajuk rules, lands slated for residential use cannot be used for commercial purposes.

The land was acquired by the government in 1965. There was a slum on the government land for a long time which was vacated by police in the name of setting up a children's park. But later it was allotted to Mirza Abbas' relatives.

The local people yesterday said there is no children's park or play ground in the densely populated Khilgaon area. Local youths used to play football and cricket on the piece of land before the motor workshops started to spring up there.

Tarique, Apu

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counsels about his chances in the case. In reply, the lawyers told him not to lose heart, said sources.

The defence argued that the charges against Tarique were "false, fabricated and concocted and they were brought only to harass him". They petitioned the court to clear him of the allegations.

On the other hand, the prosecution came up with statements of the witnesses and circumstantial evidence and prayed for the charge sheet to be accepted.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case said the allegations against the two have been proved primarily and they should be tried under the Speedy Trial (Law and Order Disruption) Act.

The foreign affairs adviser said the Commonwealth secretary general has already extended support to the caretaker government and assured technical assistance to the Election Commission.

McKinnon will also meet BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League leaders today.

The visiting Commonwealth secretary general yesterday met Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad at his President Park residence at Baridhara.

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