

Iraqi Shia market bombings kill 125

AP, Baghdad

Five suicide bombers struck Shia marketplaces in northeast Baghdad and a town north of the capital at nightfall Thursday, killing at least 125 people and wounding more than 150 in one of Iraq's deadliest days in years.

The savage attacks came as a new American ambassador began his first day on the job, and Senate Democrats ignored a veto threat and approved a bill to require President Bush to start withdrawing troops.

At least 181 people were killed or

found dead Thursday, which marked the end of the seventh week of the latest US-Iraqi military drive to curtail violence in Baghdad and surrounding regions.

The suicide bombers hit markets in the Shia town of Khalis and the Shaab neighbourhood in Baghdad during the busiest time of the day, timing that has become a trademark of what are believed to be Sunni insurgent or al-Qaeda suicide attackers.

Three suicide vehicle bombs, including an explosives-packed ambulance, detonated in a market in Khalis, 50 miles north of the

capital, which was especially crowded because government flour rations had just arrived for the first time in six months, local television stations reported.

At least 43 people were killed and 86 wounded, police said.

In the north Baghdad bombings, two suicide attackers wearing explosives vests blew themselves up in the Shalal market in the predominantly Shia Shaab neighbourhood. At least 82 people were killed and 102 wounded as they jammed the market to buy provisions on the eve of the Muslim day of rest and prayer.

The carnage in Iraq cast a shadow over Ryan Crocker's first day as ambassador. He takes over in the midst of the US-Iraqi security sweep, for which Bush committed nearly 30,000 additional troops to dampen what had become uncontrollable violence in the capital.

The Senate's rare rebuke to a wartime commander in chief came in a 51-47 vote to provide \$123 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Senators also ordered Bush to begin withdrawing troops within 120 days of the bill's passage, and set a nonbinding goal of

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Rahim Uddin Bhorosa sued for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A murder case was filed against district BNP President and Chairman of the RV group Rahim Uddin Bhorosa seven years after the death of a girl that was caused by the collapse of a wall 'illegally' erected by the industrialist.

In the case lodged with Kotwali Police Station on Thursday night, complainant of the case Jarina Begum said her 14-year-old daughter Tuni died on April 20, 2000 when a boundary wall of RV group at Tajhat under the Sadar upazila collapsed on her house.

Despite objection from the dwellers, Rahim Uddin Bhorosa grabbed about four acres of khas land beside Tajhat slum in March of the same year and raised boundary walls on it, she said.

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SAARC PROGRAMMING BODY MEET ENDS

Report being prepared for review by foreign secys

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN from New Delhi

Infrastructural, economic and information connectivity among South Asian neighbouring countries dominated discussions in the Saarc Programming Committee meeting, which concluded here last night.

"The committee is preparing a report that will be put up for review at tomorrow's Standing Committee meeting, comprising South Asian foreign secretaries," said Navtej Sarna, spokesman for the Indian external affairs ministry, at a briefing.

He said the committee, comprising the heads of the member states' South Asia directorates, reviewed a number of reports prepared by a

number of Saarc expert and working groups on energy, health and human development.

Representatives from Afghanistan, Saarc's newest member, attended the committee meeting for the first time as special attendees.

Chaired by Preeti Saran, joint secretary of the Indian external affairs ministry, the committee reviewed the Saarc expert group report on the Regional Telemedicine Network, which would link up two hospitals from each South Asian country through satellite.

India, who proposed the network at the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka, will set up the satellites that will cover the entire region, said Sarna.

The committee also reviewed the

report by the expert group on establishing a South Asian University, proposed by India in 2005.

India decided to provide Rs 25 million for upgrading the Saarc Secretariat in Kathmandu, Sarna said.

The committee also finalised the modalities of the Saarc Museum of Textile and Handicrafts that will start running from a temporary location in Delhi from November 2007. A permanent location would be fixed after further meetings.

The committee also discussed

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A policewoman checks the bag of a woman on her way to the High Court mosque, left, and Rab men search a passenger's baggage at Chittagong Railway Station as part of beefed up security measures following hanging of six militants.



PHOTO: STAR

Heavy fighting in Pakistan kills 56

AFP, Wana

Pakistani tribesmen traded heavy rocket and mortar fire with foreign al-Qaeda militants in a border region for a second day Friday, leaving 56 people dead, the interior minister said Friday. Explosions could be heard in Wana, the capital of the lawless South Waziristan tribal area bordering Afghanistan, a day after a ceasefire between the tribesmen and the mainly Uzbek and Chechen rebels broke down.

Violence first erupted in the mountainous region on March 19 when a Taliban commander-turned-

government supporter ordered foreign insurgents led by wanted rebel Tahir Yuldashev to disarm, leaving 160 people dead last week.

"Fifty-four people were killed today, two were yesterday. They include 45 foreigners," Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao told AFP.

"The fighting is going on, it intensified today after peace talks failed. Tribes are insisting on their demand that these people either surrender or quit the area."

The government says the latest developments reflect the success of

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Asia to face floods, drought, disease

Says UN climate panel

AFP, Paris

Countries across Asia face heightened risk of flooding, severe water shortages, infectious disease and hunger from global warming, the UN's top climate experts say in a massive report to be unveiled next week.

Shrinking freshwater supplies aggravated by population growth and rising standards of living will "very likely" -- a 90 per cent certainty -- "adversely affect more than a billion people in Asia by the 2050s," the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns.

The report, which deals with the impacts of global warming, is the second volume in a three-volume

review of the evidence for climate change, the first since 2001.

A draft of the 1,400-page document acquired by AFP says that even if dramatic measures are taken to reduce output of the carbon dioxide (CO2) that drives warming, temperatures worldwide will continue to climb for decades to come, unleashing unwelcome changes across the planet.

And if nothing at all is done to mitigate climate change, the impact in some regions could be catastrophic by century's end.

By 2080, the report says, it is likely that 1.1 to 3.2 billion people worldwide will experience water scarcity, 200 to 600 million will suffer from hunger, and each year an

additional two to seven million people will be victims of coastal flooding. The predictions vary according to the temperature increases forecast and the capacity to adapt, but many parts of Asia, the world's most populous region, will be among the hardest hit under any scenario.

In South Asia, cereal yields could drop in some areas by up to 30 per cent by 2050 due to drought.

Even modest rises in sea levels, caused by warming ocean surface temperatures and melting ice caps, will cause flooding and economic disruption in many of the region's densely-populated mega-deltas.

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Iran TV airs British sailor's 'confession'

UK fails to secure strong UNSC backing

AFP, Tehran

Iran aired television footage on Friday of a British sailor "confessing" to trespassing in Iranian waters, further escalating the diplomatic furore over Tehran's capture of 15 navy personnel.

Britain, which failed to win strong UN Security Council condemnation of Iran over the detention of its 15 sailors and marines, vowed it would work to further isolate the Islamic republic over the crisis.

Prayer Timing		
March 31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Prime Minister Tony Blair voiced his "disgust" at the latest broadcast of the captive Britons and Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said she saw no sign that Iran was seeking to solve the crisis.

"We've got to pursue this with the necessary firmness and determination but also patience," Blair said. "The most important thing is to make sure that our people are returned safe."

But Tehran has so far refused to bow to mounting international pressure to release the 14 men and one woman seized in the northern Gulf a week ago and now being held in a secret location.

Britain insists they were on a routine anti-smuggling patrol in Iraqi waters but Iran says they were in its territorial waters.

"I would like to apologise for entering your waters without any permission," the Royal Navy serviceman identified as Nathan

Thomas Sommers said in an interview broadcast on Arabic-language Al-Alam television.

"Since we have been arrested in Iran our treatment has been very friendly, they took care of us very well."

The interview was interspersed with images of the sailor sitting with two of his captured colleagues, including the only woman Faye Turney, smiling, and with bowls of fruit and flowers in front of them.

In the first footage of the group aired on Wednesday, Turney was also shown saying that they had trespassed into Iranian waters.

"Using our military personnel for purposes of propaganda like this is outrageous," Britain's Foreign Office said.

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'Ban nuke tests, stop use of chemical fertiliser in S Asia'

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN from Tangail

The Fifth Saarc Peoples' Forum demanded ban on all nuclear tests and biological weapons in South Asia and urged the Saarc members to stop use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and other chemicals harmful for natural resources and biodiversity.

The forum also recognised the importance of using water from rivers common to Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries to ensure benefit to the people of this region.

The three-day event at Ridoypur of Delduar upazila in Tangail concluded yesterday with a declaration urging all top leaders of the South Asian countries to be cooperative at the 14th Saarc Summit to resolve the problems.

The Ridoypur declaration will be formally announced at a press conference in the capital today.

"We want to build good relationship among the peoples of South

Asia and we also want to make them aware of the corporate interest," Farhad Mazhar of Nayakrishi Andolon that organised the forum told The Daily Star.

The forum leaders proposed setting up a people's commission to examine all issues related to protection of biodiversity and security of livelihood.

In its declaration, the forum called for uniting South Asian peoples to ensure their sovereignty.

Expressing concerns over violation of the constitutional and fundamental rights due to the state's mentality to serve the interests of corporations, the forum leaders said people's right to harness natural resources must be protected.

"The Saarc has the opportunity to enhance cooperation among the governments in a potential way that would bring trust among them that is very much important for human rights protection

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