

30 killed in Iraq bloodshed

US military prison chief detained for aiding enemy

AGENCIES, Baghdad

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In northern Iraq, three Kurdish militiamen were killed and 13 wounded in a coordinated car bomb and suicide attack in the town of Zammar, northwest of the main city of Mosul.

The early morning assault targeted the offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of regional president Massud Barzani, a party spokesman told AFP.

On Monday, 10 people were killed and 20 wounded in a similar attack on the party's offices in the town of Tal Isqaf.

The US military, meanwhile, reported that two women and two children were "unfortunately killed" in an air strike near Taji, north of Baghdad, during an operation against a suspected al-Qaeda hideout.

Four militants were also killed in the raid.

Meanwhile, the US military charged a top commander on Thursday with aiding the enemy and fraternizing with the daughter of an inmate in a US-run prison he headed in the latest scandal to hit the military in Iraq.

Govt unwilling free

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proposals for electoral reforms.

The CEC said the EC will review the opinions expressed by the eminent personalities and hold talks with the editors of newspapers and senior journalists soon for their opinions on the proposals.

He said the government interfered in the activities of the previous EC. "But I will not allow this. We [the EC] are independent... The government cannot interfere in our activities if we do not give them any scope," Huda said.

In his inaugural address, the CEC said no reform proposal will be finalized without holding talks with the political parties since they are the main stakeholders.

"We had planned to hold talks with the political parties first, but we could not do it because of the restriction on indoor politics. We will hold talks with the political parties as soon as the government withdraws the restriction," he said.

He said five consultants are expected to start working at the EC Secretariat to prepare a project proposal for simultaneously preparing the voter list with photographs and national identity cards.

INDEPENDENT EC SECRETARIAT

About the much-talked-about demand for an independent EC Secretariat, the CEC said the EC is in favour of freeing its secretariat from the PMO's control. But it is not possible at this moment as there is no parliament to amend the constitution, he said.

Talking to reporters after the dialogue, former CEC Justice KM Sadek, however, said he does not think it requires an amendment to the constitution to separate the EC Secretariat from the PMO.

Former adviser to the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan, Shujan Secretary Dr Badul Alam Majumder and a few other participants echoed the view during the dialogue.

Former CEC Justice Abdur Rouf avoided any specific comment, saying, "The constitution has been bypassed many times and what is the problem if it is bypassed again?"

Justice Rouf told the dialogue that the election commission secretariats in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been separated from the executive branch. "Why it should not be done here [in Bangladesh]?" he said.

Khaleda, Hasina

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crore in her accounts, she said. "The money belongs to Bangabandhu Memorial Trust."

She added, "People and organisations from across the globe donate to the Trust. I can't tell you exactly how much money it has. The chief accountant could give the specifics."

She has a joint account with her sister Sheikh Rehana. But that's not supposed to have such a big amount, Hasina said adding that she won't be surprised if somebody had put the money into the accounts to fit them up.

Despite repeated attempts, neither Khaleda nor any member of her family could be contacted for reaction.

Meanwhile, replying to a query, BB Governor Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday told reporters, "The central bank can ask for information on anyone's account if necessary." He, however, did not elaborate on the matter.

According to preliminary information, BNP Chairperson Khaleda and her match in the AL together have accounts with six or seven banks. They have the money in fixed deposits and other savings and current accounts.

Sonali and Agrani Bank officials seeking anonymity admitted that the chiefs of the two major political parties that have dominated the political landscape over the years each have Tk 2-3 crore. But they refused to give specific figures on the accounts.

Contacted, the central bank authorities declined to say anything on the find.

Sources said the NCC is examining the account statements to find out the sources of the funds and irregularities, if any.

Salahuddin

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minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, BNP leader and former state minister Mir Nasiruddin and his son Barrister Helauddin, and BNP leader and former state minister Aman Ullah Aman and his wife Sabera Aman will be submitted on Tuesday.

Three FIRs were filed on March 6 against them for concealment of information in their wealth statements sought by the anti-graft body.

Khaleda to leave

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Arabia recently.

But the government issued a press note on Wednesday declaring that there was neither any pressure on Khaleda to go into exile nor any restriction on her movement.

The BNP chairperson went to the Baridhara residence of her younger brother Sayeed Iskandar at 9:50pm yesterday.

Several BNP leaders, including BNP Joint Secretary General Selima Rahman and Assistant Office Secretary Syed Emran Saleh Prince, and a few close relatives were also allowed to meet Khaleda yesterday.

The authorities gave hints that they may allow some more important BNP leaders and close relatives to meet Khaleda today.

Mainul

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Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, requested the EC to find out solutions to ensure the separation of its secretariat from the PMO.

CEC Huda said the EC will examine if it is possible to separate the EC Secretariat without amending the constitution.

Senior journalist Syed Abul Maksud said it is the responsibility of the EC to hold the election as soon as possible so that an elected government can assume power. "There is a possibility that an unconstitutional government will emerge if the Election Commission fails to hold the election soon," he said.

At the dialogue, a few participants opposed the EC proposal for providing tax exemption for the funds of the political parties. They also suggested imposing restriction on the parties' fund collection.

The CEC said the EC has no specific information about the sources of the political parties' funds. "Talking to some political leaders, I understand that the major political parties do not face any problem raising funds. But the smaller parties do face problems and they want to reduce the election expenditures," Huda said.

The EC does not want to be the "master" of the political parties and control them, the CEC said, adding that the EC only wants the political parties to follow some rules and regulations of the commission.

A few participants, including former army chiefs Nuruddin Khan and M Harun-ur- Rashid, and Debapriya, opposed the proposal that says a civil or military bureaucrat or a statutory body official cannot participate in the polls before three years from their retirement.

Some NGO leaders supported the part of the proposal for government officials but opposed the part that deals with the NGO officials.

Women participants of the dialogue demanded that the EC should include a provision in its proposal to make it mandatory for the political parties to nominate a certain percent of female candidates in the election.

He also lauded the government initiative to bring about reforms in politics. Reforms are necessary for the political parties and for the good of the country as well.

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